ABSTRACT

Title: *Il fine della pittura*: Canon Reformulation in the Age of Counter-Reformation. The Lombard-Roman Confluence
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Counter-Reformation treatises are typically dismissed as determiners of style. This dissertation challenges the prevailing view that rejects Counter-Reformation theory as key motivators of sacred style, and will prove that one treatise in particular, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti’s 1582 *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*, held a considerable amount of authority almost immediately after its publication. Through a close study of the *Discorso*’s nature-centered language and its applicability to the Lombard tradition of presenting “tangible presences,” it is evident that one artist, in particular, fulfilled Paleotti’s vision for a “reformed” sacred style, and one who seldom appears in connection with the cardinal: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. The interconnection of Paleotti’s theology of nature, Lombard painting style, and the sacred works of Caravaggio is established through this contextual study of Counter-Reformation Rome in the late Cinquecento and early Seicento.

Paleotti’s *Discorso* is evaluated as a whole and as an expression of Paleotti’s ideas on sacred art. This examination and analyses of Paleotti’s major points and emphases shows how they collectively form a cohesive language and theoretical basis (“theology of nature”) for the reformulation of sacred images based on naturalism. Careful readings of Cinquecento and Seicento literature on art (from Vasari to Bellori) draw correspondences between the words used to describe Lombard style and Paleotti’s
language in his *Discorso*. The dissemination of his “theology of nature” is demonstrated through reconstruction of Paleotti’s Roman circle. Paleotti’s important ties to the Oratorians, the Jesuits, the Accademia di San Luca, and his friendships with key cardinal-patrons in the circle of Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, provided an ideal network for the dissemination of his ideas that would in fact put him into contact with Caravaggio. Caravaggio’s plebian religious scenes and figures correlate with Paleotti’s conviction that naturalism served as a bridge between painted subject and Christian viewer. This dissertation fills not only a critical lacuna in Counter-Reformation studies, but also opens new contextualizing avenues of research and dialogue on the intricate and determining relationship between Counter-Reformation theory and style, at which, at the heart, stand Cardinal Paleotti and Caravaggio.
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PREFACE

The twenty-fifth and final session of the Council of Trent closed on the fourth of December 1563 with its decree on sacred images. The decree, however, was general at best. This was a rather surprising outcome as the function and efficacy of sacred imagery was among the primary points of contention between the Protestants, and the Catholic Church, which ultimately fueled the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic response, conventionally termed the Counter-Reformation. Sacred imagery functioned as an economic, political, social, and religious vehicle in the Church’s machination in sustaining the supremacy of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Catholic tradition, and the Catholic faith. Pragmatism and necessity required not only more vigilant monitoring of art placed in public spaces, but also a new style that would not draw further antagonism from Protestant, and even, Catholic dissenters. Seven Post-Tridentine treatises on sacred art appeared in Italy between 1564 and 1652. Many scholars, however, dismiss the importance of Counter-Reformation treatises as determiners of style. This dissertation challenges this prevailing view through a contextual study of Counter-Reformation Rome in the late Cinquecento and early Seicento. This study will prove that one treatise in particular, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti’s 1582 Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane, held a considerable amount of authority almost immediately after its publication. Through a close study of the Discorso’s nature-centered language and its applicability to the Lombard tradition of presenting “tangible presences,” it will become evident that one artist, in particular, fulfilled Paleotti’s vision for a “reformed” sacred style, and one who seldom appears in connection with the cardinal: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.
Chapter One, *The Debate Over Images: Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation*, discusses the major points of debate between Protestants and Catholics over sacred imagery. An examination of these contentious points will show that the Tridentine decree on sacred imagery was intended primarily to smother the flames ignited by Protestant attacks on Catholic rituals and veneration of sacred relics and art. The decree thus served as validation of sacred imagery, rather than as an instructive discourse on style for Post-Tridentine artists to follow.

The task of addressing style in sacred imagery, in the end, fell upon the shoulders of Post-Tridentine theorists. In 1564, just one year after the closing of the Council of Trent, Giovanni Andrea Gilio published his *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de’pittori circa l’istorie*.ⁱ Gilio’s *Degli errori* would spark the publication of a series of Counter-Reformatory treatises on sacred painting through the next century. It was, however, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti’s 1582 *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* that would carry the authority, promise, and direction for sacred painting, upon which artists, as well as subsequent theorists would follow. Several editions of Paleotti’s *Discorso* have been published with critical notes and introductions, including the modern editions of the *Discorso* by Paola Barocchi (1961) and Gian Franco Freguglia (2002), and Paolo Prodi’s 1990 edition, which reproduces Paleotti’s original text.² Numerous studies

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on Paleotti’s *Discorso* are also available both in Italian and in English, but these focus primarily on either general or singular aspects of Paleotti’s treatise. Paolo Prodi’s lengthy essay *Ricerche sulla teorica delle arti figurative nella riforma cattolica*\(^3\) underscored the connection between Paleotti’s ideas on naturalism and the naturalistic style exemplified in the art of the Carracci, who in 1583 had founded their own Academy based upon this principle. A similar connection is espoused by A. W. A. Boschloo, who saw in Paleotti’s *Discorso* and the work of the Carracci, a shared interest in “visible reality.”\(^4\) Donald Posner\(^5\) and Charles Dempsey\(^6\) each contributed to new understanding of the relation between Paleotti and the art of the Carracci, as well as identifying the Emilian and Venetian influences that inspired their personal reform of sacred art. Other studies have concentrated on particular aspects of the *Discorso*, including the hierarchical

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framework of Paleotti’s *delights*, the correspondence between the works of Bolognese artist Bartolomeo Cesi and Paleotti’s discussion of nudity, and the relationship between Paleotti’s *Discorso* and the artistic commissions undertaken during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII. In Chapter Two, *Paleotti’s Discorso and the Theology of Nature*, I will evaluate the *Discorso* as a whole and as an expression of Paleotti’s ideas on sacred art. Examination and analyses of Paleotti’s major points and emphases will show how they collectively form a cohesive language and theoretical basis (“theology of nature”) for the reformulation of sacred images based on naturalism.

Chapter Three, *Natura and Sfumato: Leonardo’s Legacy and the Culture of “Tangible Presence” in Lombardy*, identifies and establishes a direct correlation between Paleotti’s “theology of nature” and the naturalistic style of Lombardy. The issue of stylistic categories is always problematic. The Vasarian Tuscan-Roman and the Pino-Dolce Venetian stylistic categories are commonplace in the theoretical scholarship of Renaissance art, but the use and meaning of the word “Lombard” as a stylistic category and descriptive term employed by contemporary Cinquecento and Seicento writers has

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seen limited critical examination. Roberto Longhi10 was the first to recognize artists such as the Campi, Moretto da Brescia, and Girolamo Romanino, as early Lombard predecessors of Caravaggio. More recently, the 2004 exhibition catalogue, *Painters of Reality*, addressed the issue of the Lombard category directly.11 The assessment by the various contributors of the catalogue capitalizes on the interest in naturalism in Lombardy, a heritage bequeathed from Leonardo’s Milan years (1481/83-1499 and 1508-1513). In Chapter Three, an examination of Milanese art theory, and an analysis of the stylistic characteristics or qualities that art theorists from Giorgio Vasari to Giovanni Pietro Bellori attribute to the Lombard School or Lombard artists provide a means of isolating and distinguishing a specific brand of naturalism associated with the Lombard region. This scrutiny of the vast contemporary literature combined with meticulous visual analyses of works of art discussed by these art theorists will prove that the “Lombard” appellation, often thought to be a modern development for the categorization of artists, was even in the late Cinquecento and early Seicento, a precise, distinct style. The Lombard style based on the representation of “tangible presences” was not only a recognized artistic phenomenon, but also one that was consonant with Paleotti’s ideas on sacred paintings.


Paleotti’s reformulation of sacred art was unofficially promulgated in the last decade of the Cinquecento, when a series of correlated events occurred that provided the means for the dissemination of his ideas. In Chapter Four, *Addressing the Popolo: The Roman Ambient in the Last Two Decades of Cinquecento*, the focus is placed on Cardinal Paleotti’s Roman social circle, which included not only a complex network of cardinals who had intimate ties with Paleotti, but religious congregations (Oratorians and the Jesuits), and the Accademia di San Luca. Each entity of Paleotti’s social circle will be fully examined, and their relationships and associations with Paleotti (and with each other) reconstructed. The respective ideologies, theories, and artistic tastes of Paleotti’s associates will also be addressed, which will demonstrate “how” and “why” Paleotti’s ideas were accepted and disseminated. The Accademia di San Luca, will be given particular attention as a proposed center where the presence of Paleotti and the ideas outlined in his *Discorso* conveniently found expression in the annual selection of the principe and in the education (guidance) of artists. There is little scholarship, particularly recent studies, on the Accademia itself. Romano Alberti’s *Origine, et progresso dell’Accademia del Disegno, de Pittori, Scultori, & Architetti di Roma*, published in 1604, remains the primary record of the initial years of activity at the Academy. Two nineteenth-century studies on the Accademia di San Luca by Melchiorre Missirini and

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Jean Arnaud provide little new insight. A major project involving the reconstruction of a comprehensive history of the Accademia di San Luca is currently underway at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. This project will be critical for the evaluation of the importance of the Accademia in Counter-Reformation Rome, which I believe, is presently undervalued.

Chapter Five, *Scaling the Ladder to the Divine: The Application of Paleotti’s Canon in Caravaggio and His Contemporaries*, examines Caravaggio’s public and private sacred paintings, and evaluates the artist’s fulfillment, whether consciously or unconsciously, of Paleotti’s vision for sacred art. Caravaggio’s proposed association with the Accademia di San Luca, the relationship of his patrons with Paleotti and his circle, and an examination of the inventories of paintings in the respective collections of the members in this circle will be discussed at length. The scholarship on Caravaggio is immense. Key contextual studies that this chapter builds upon, however, include Walter Friedlaender’s *Caravaggio Studies*, Howard Hibbard’s 1985 monograph on Caravaggio, the studies by Maurizio Calvesi and Joseph Chorpenning, and John Melchior Missirini, *Memorie per servire alla storia della romana Accademia di S. Luca* (Rome: Nella Stamperia de Romanis, 1823); and J. Arnaud, *L’Académie de Saint-Luc à Rome* (Rome: H. Loescher, 1886).


Moffitt’s 2004 book *Caravaggio in Context*, all of whom examine the iconography and style of Caravaggio’s religious paintings within the context of Counter-Reformation culture. A significant amount of study has already been done on the Milanese collection of Federico Borromeo (by Arlene Quint, Pamela Jones), and the individual Roman collections of Del Monte (Christoph Frommel, Luigi Spezzaferro, and particularly Zygmunt Waźbiński), the Mattei (Creighton Gilbert, the important study by Francesca Cappelletti and Laura Testa, and a 1995 exhibition at the Palazzo Barberini), and the Giustiniani (Silvia Danesi Squarzina, Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey). These

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collections, however, have never been considered together nor evaluated according to the artists and styles of the works present in their respective collections, among which include numerous original works by Caravaggio and Lombard or Lombard-inspired paintings.

Chapter Six, Paleotti’s “Theology of Nature” and the Phenomenon of Caravaggismo and Lombard Naturalism in Clementine Rome, will address some of the key public commissions executed during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII. Two key lengthy studies (Morton Colp Abromson and Stefania Macioce) focusing on the artistic production undertaken during the reign of Pope Clement VIII have been published. The comprehensiveness of these studies makes it unnecessary for an overview of these commissions, thus this chapter centers rather on aspects that have not been fully acknowledged. It will become evident that the subject and styles of other artists active in Clementine Rome, most of whom were members of the Accademia di San Luca, also conformed to Paleotti’s prescriptions on sacred art and Lombard “tangible presence.” These examples, moreover, underscore the phenomenon of Caravaggismo in the late Cinquecento and early Seicento and elicits questions regarding Paleotti’s (and his


Discorso’s role at the Accademia di San Luca, as well as Caravaggio’s association with the cardinal and the aforementioned institution.

The extensive authority of Paleotti’s Discorso is validated and underscored in Chapter Seven, The Legacy of Paleotti’s Discorso in the Seicento, where distinct relationships between Paleotti’s treatise and the treatises that emerged in its wake will be outlined. There are no studies, at least to my knowledge, which considers these treatises together as a whole or addresses the many points of similarity they share with Paleotti’s Discorso. The critical examination of these texts is indicative of the authority and dissemination of Paleotti’s ideas into the mid-Seicento.

This dissertation is intended to fill not only a critical lacuna in Counter-Reformation studies, but also to open new contextualizing avenues of research and dialogue on the intricate and determining relationship between Counter-Reformation theory and style, at which, at the heart, stand Cardinal Paleotti and Caravaggio.
CHAPTER 1
THE DEBATE OVER IMAGES: PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION

The utilization of the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation as designations for precise historical periods has long been a point of contention among scholars of religious history.\(^1\) The terminus for the Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation remains somewhat ambiguous, as responses from both camps continued well into the Seicento, and some argue, even beyond. There is, however, a substantive basis for dating the beginning of the Protestant and Counter-Reformation in 1517 and 1545, respectively. Vocal dissent against the institution of the Catholic Church during the Renaissance, both within and outside of Italy, can be traced even as early as the late-Quattrocento. The year 1517, however, marks a dramatic shift in intensity and frequency of condemnations against the pope and the clergy, as well as of Catholic doctrine and tradition. On October 31, 1517, the German Augustinian, Martin Luther, posted his 95 Theses, containing ninety-five charges against the Catholic Church, on the door of Wittenberg Cathedral. Initially, Luther may not have intended his theses to be widely

\(^1\) The designation of “Protestant Reformation” as a historical period is less problematic. See Salvatore Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi, vol. 43, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies (Missouri: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 4-5. There is a lack of agreement among scholars, however, on the utilization of “Counter-Reformation” as a period designation. For a concise discussion on the various arguments between religious historians regarding the period label “Counter-Reformation,” see John W. O’Malley, *Trent and all that: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). While “Counter-Reformation” is still a point of debate, I utilize this term throughout this dissertation in reference to the Catholic Church’s official “countering” of Protestant criticisms marked by the opening of the Council of Trent in 1545. I also utilize “Post-Tridentine” and “Post-Trent” when referring to literature and art produced “after” the closing of the Council of Trent in 1563.
distributed (or indeed distributed at all), but printed copies were soon disseminated throughout Europe, even reaching the hands of Pope Leo X. Luther’s theses sparked the fervor of other Protestants, fanning the flames of an already growing North European resentment and dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church in Rome. The Catholic response was not immediate; rather, the opening of the Council of Trent in 1545 by Pope Paul III marks the beginning of an official and organized response to Protestant criticism: the inauguration of concerted efforts to counter Protestant accusations, and especially, to stem the quick growth and infiltration of Protestants, Protestant sympathizers, and Protestant ideas into the Italian peninsula.

The debate over images stemmed from doctrinal differences. The Protestants believed in *sola fide*, the supremacy and singularity of faith alone. All exterior forms of religion – rituals, ceremonies, art – were deemed useless. The Scriptures provided the only form of truth, and interior faith and devotion were the only means through which a Christian could hope to achieve salvation. The Catholic position similarly stressed the importance of scriptural truth and faith, but they also advocated *good works*. For Catholics, acts of charity, endowments, donations, outward forms of religious devotion, and the “buying” of indulgences could also secure one’s place in heaven, or at the very least, lessen one’s sentence in Purgatory. In his 95 *Theses*, Luther specifically cited the abomination of Pope Leo X’s decision to sell indulgences in order to fund the re-building of St. Peter’s. The fourth-century Constantinian basilica had certainly seen better days. The plan, however, was not merely to restore the building, but to build a larger, grander, more opulent edifice worthy for the heirs of St. Peter, and the seat of the Catholic faith.
The selling of indulgences was thus deemed necessary, and even appropriate, especially considering the grandeur of the project. Indulgences fulfilled the Catholic practice of repentance and absolution, and who could fault the utilization of funds procured to build a house of God? Luther, however, did not agree. Aside from the amoral and unethical use of indulgences, he argued, it was also the reliance and function of these outward signs that undermined the true meaning of faith and the Word of God.

Luther’s steadfast belief in sola fide did not translate, however, into a dogmatic position against sacred imagery. His position, in fact, was moderate in comparison to other radical Protestants who followed in his wake. Luther considered images “indifferent,” and indeed could serve a functional purpose.² For Luther, the danger was not in idolatry, but Christians believing that they could buy their way to heaven by endowing art.³ The primary problem was not in the making of images (despite the First and Second Commandments, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” and “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image”), but rather how they were utilized and why they were created. According to Luther, one definitely should not adore an image as if it embodied the person or persons depicted, nor should one expect benefits or merits for endowing works of art.


³ The subject of “buying” or “earning” one’s way to heaven was addressed in Luther’s Sermon on Good Works (early 1520s). See Michalski, The Reformation and the Visual Arts, 7.
It is clear that Luther accepted the production, existence, and use of images, albeit if filtered through his own theology. The Word of Scripture guided the Lutheran program of iconography, first and foremost, and second, by Christological ideology. Luther thus favored historical representations of the life of Christ. He rejected images of Veronica’s cloth, images of certain saints, and representations of the Virgin that denied the primacy of Christ.⁴ In terms of style in sacred imagery, however, Luther says very little. Sergiusz Michalski, in his book entitled, The Reformation and the Visual Arts, however, draws attention to a brief, yet important, quotation cited by Luther in his Table Talk. According to Luther, Albrecht Dürer had once said, “I like pictures that are painted as simple as possible,” to which Luther commented, “Likewise I would like to deliver the simplest sermon that every believer could understand.”⁵ Indeed, simplicity was paramount in the art produced in the Lutheran ambient. The proliferation of unadorned woodcut prints by artists such as Lucas Cranach, juxtaposing the fallacy of the Catholic belief in good works and the Protestant conviction in faith alone, accompanied by Scriptural inscriptions, exemplify the simplicity and didactic function of art favored by Luther.

Other Protestants, while in agreement with Luther’s position on sola fide, and the singular truth of the Scriptures, strongly opposed his moderate position on sacred imagery. Andreas Karlstadt (1480-1541), Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), and John Calvin (1509-64), among other Protestant extremists, on the contrary, considered idolatry as relevant and perilous to the Christian faith. Karlstadt denied the advantages in the use

⁴ Michlaski, Reformation and the Visual Arts, 31-36.

⁵ Ibid., 39.
of any physical aids, believing it led Christians, even the uneducated and lower classes, away from the Scriptures and the centrality of interior faith and spiritual prayer. In 1521, Karlstadt began to advocate the removal of all images from churches, and on January 27, 1522, he published his tract entitled *On the Removal of Images*. For Karlstadt, idolatry was the primary issue and justification for the removal (and even destruction) of sacred images. He vehemently denied the doctrine of the prototype, the relative types of veneration – *dulia, latria, and hyperdulia* (honoring, adoration, veneration) – and the claim that images served as the Bible for the illiterate (*Biblia pauperum*). Images, in Karlstadt’s view, not only led to idolatry, but also to the false belief in rituals, ceremonies, superstitions, miraculous images, the cult of saints, and the conviction that Christians can *earn* their way to heaven.

The Swiss reformer, Zwingli, was also formulating his own attack on sacred imagery contemporaneously with Karlstadt. Zwingli similarly disavowed the use of external aids. Salvation could not be obtained through the senses or through corporeal attributions, which lead Christians astray. Zwingli cited numerous breaches of decorum in sacred imagery to prove the danger of the sensory faculty. In his *Eine Antwort, Valentin Compar gegeben* of 1525, Zwingli observed:


Though idols be not forbidden by God, they are so hideously abused that they should not be tolerated. Here stands a Magdalene so whorishly painted that even the priests have always said: who can maintain devotion here and observe moderation. Yea, even the externally pure and immaculate maid and mother of Jesus Christ had to have her breasts bared. There stands a Sebastian, a Maurice and the pious John the Baptist so nobly, manfully and sensually [depicted] that the women had to confess because of them...

The rejection of externals was ultimately a denial of the visible, confirming St. Paul’s words, that we do not know Christ after flesh. It was a juxtaposition between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, flesh and spirit. For Zwingli, “What you give the senses you take away from the Spirit.”

The Genevan reformer, John Calvin, dealt with the question of sacred imagery in a more concise and systematic way in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536-59). Like Karlstadt and Zwingli who preceded him, Calvin extolled interior faith, versus faith apprehended through external means. Calvin stressed the invisibility of God: “We are similar to God in our souls, and no image can represent him.” For Calvin, the Second Commandment, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,” was unquestionable. God could not be seen and should not be worshipped or venerated in a physical manner. In Calvin’s view, the cherubs placed on the Ark of the Covenant should not be interpreted as a justification for imagery, but rather they served as a veil distancing and concealing the grandeur of God from the eyes of the people. God is unknowable, Calvin reasoned,

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10 Ibid., 62.
and therefore sacred images served no function, even for the illiterate, as he cannot be apprehended in a corporeal manner. Calvin returned to the subject of images after the first edition of his *Institutes*, in the tract entitled, *How to Shun the Unlawful Rites* (1537). Here he defined idolatry not as the veneration of other gods, but rather a lack of faith leading one to promulgate and believe in cults and superstition. It is man’s weakness, his lack of inner faith and devotion, which necessitates a carnal presence of God. These physical representations, in turn, deceive Christians by stimulating their senses and moving them to believe falsely that a divine presence is housed within the image.

In fact, when men thought that they beheld God or a memory of Him in the images, they honored Him in them. And at the end, having fixed their sight and their senses there [on images] they have become more and more brutish, enraptured in their contemplation, as if there was some divinity in them.\(^{11}\)

This statement, taken from the expanded 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, indicates Calvin’s disavowal of spiritual or instructional benefits through the recourse of the senses or through emotions procured from them. It is the potential power of physical images that undermines true faith and the supreme power of God and his Word. Calvin too would advocate the removal and destruction of all images: “It was a father who termed it a dreadful abomination to see an image in the churches of Christians. They are far from remaining within these limits when they leave not a corner free of images.”\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\) Translated in Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 14.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 10.
The Catholic response to these iconophobes was immediate, albeit primarily focused on countering the growing advocacy for the removal and destruction of images. Shortly after Karlstadt published his tract, *On the Removal of Images* in 1522, two published rebuttals to Karlstadt emerged: Hieronymus Emser’s (1477-1527) tract entitled, *That one should not remove images of the Saints from the churches nor dishonor them, and that they are not forbidden in Scripture*, and Johannes Eck’s (1486-1543) *Of not Removing Images of Christ and the Saints*. The works of both Emser and Eck were polemical in tone, and relied primarily on the authority of Early Christian writers, and in particular, the medieval tradition of images, utilized in the *Biblia pauperum* (Bibles for the illiterate), for *memoria* (memory aids), and for *excitatio* (vehicles for exciting devotion).\(^{13}\) The function of images as scenes in the *Biblia pauperum* stems from the sixth century proclamation of Gregory the Great that images in churches aided the illiterate by allowing them to, “read by seeing on the walls what they cannot read in books.”\(^{14}\) Through this dictum, sacred imagery had the inherent function not only to teach, but also to assist the faithful in keeping within their memories (*memoria*) models of piety and virtue that they were expected to imitate. Sacred imagery, even more importantly, had the power to transform visual excitation into spiritual excitation (*excitatio*), moving the viewer to piety, and meditation. Frequently cited examples for the


affective function of images included St. Bernard, spiritually stirred while meditating in front of a crucifix, and St. Francis who was filled with a spiritual flame while focusing on the vision of the Crucifix.

In Italy, Alberto Pio (1475-1531) and Ambrogio Catarino (1484-1553) joined the debate of sacred imagery with their own tracts. Pio in his *Disputations against Erasmus* (1526 and 1529) underscored that *gaudium* (joy) was intrinsically joined to all forms of divine ceremony and rituals, and in particular, the cult of images. According to Pio, images excite and move worshippers to devotion and piety. Catarino published his own response to Erasmus in his 1542 *Opuscula*, underscoring, as had Emser, Eck and Pio, the significance of *excitatio*.

[Painting] is not an obstacle to worship in spirit, on the contrary it helps to excite the spirit which does not occur regularly. From paintings and from images, in fact, it moves the senses and the fantasy, it excites thinking and meditation, and finally contemplation of the mind. Whoever denies this is not a man.\(^{15}\)

In addition to these theological tracts, the topic of the function and importance of images also found its way into the works of art theorists, such as Lodovico Dolce (1508-68). In Dolce’s 1557 *Dialogo della Pittura (L’Aretino)*, one of his interlocutors, Pietro Aretino, repeated the function of images as “books of the ignorant” and as stimuli in “awakening

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\(^{15}\) Scavizzi, *Arte e architettura sacra*, 192: “[La pittura] non è di ostacolo all’adorare in spirito, anzi aiuto ad eccitare lo spirito che non viglia assiduamente. Dai quadri e dalle immagini infatti si muovono i sensi e la fantasia, si eccita il pensiero e la meditazione, e infine la contemplazione della mente. Che nega questo non è un uomo.”
the understanding of their devotees [...] into contemplating the subject which they represent.” 16

In the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent on 4 December 1563, the Catholic Church made what it hoped to be its definitive response to the Protestant offensive against images. The decree, while offering general prescriptions on the proper content of sacred imagery, for the most part, clearly centered on refuting Protestant charges against images. The Holy Council’s decree opened with the issue of idolatry, the Protestants’ primary charge against the employment of images. Images of Christ, the Virgin, and Saints are to be venerated and honored, but not because the image contained the divinity itself. The worshippers’ prayers and veneration were instead said to have been bestowed upon likenesses that refer to the prototype. Nor should worshippers venerate and pray before images in expectation that profit or hope could be procured from them. Here, the Holy Council acknowledged the threat of idolatry, but in formally ordering bishops to teach the proper manner of venerating images, they implied that the transgression of idolatry would not occur. The decree then moved to the issue of the function, value and efficacy of images, by reiterating once again the tradition of images as used in the Biblia pauperum, and as memoria, and of excitatio.

Moreover, let the bishops diligently teach that by means of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption portrayed in paintings and other representations the people are instructed [biblia pauperum] and confirmed in the articles of faith, which ought to be born in mind and constantly reflected upon; also that great profit is derived from all holy images, not only because the people are thereby reminded of the benefits and gifts

bestowed on them by Christ [memoria], but also because through the saints the miracles of God and salutary examples are set before the eyes of the faithful, so that they may give God thanks for those things, may fashion their own life and conduct in imitation of the saints and be moved to adore and love God and cultivate piety [excitatio].

The council, while repeating the standard validation for the function of images, in addition, acknowledged that images could be misused in these capacities, and thus provided both precautions and solutions. As images served to instruct, images depicting false doctrine or superstition were to be removed, particularly because of the danger they presented to the illiterate and uneducated populace. In their function as memoria, the Holy Council again repeated that the sacred personages represented in images did not actually contain the divinity. Finally, and most importantly, in their capacity to incite emotions, images must not be “painted and adorned with a seductive charm.” This comment was surely intended as a direct response to the numerous objections lodged by Protestants, such as Martin Bucer and Huldrych Zwingli. In his 1520 Gesprechbiechlin Neue Karsthans, Bucer voiced his dismay at seeing erotically charged images in churches, where “no strumpet is more lasciviously dressed or shamelessly adorned than the Mothers of God, Saint Barbara, Catherine and others now portrayed.” Zwingli voiced similar objections against lascivious images, where Magdalene’s and women are “whorishly made,” where the Madonna’s breast is bared, or male saints depicted

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18 Ibid.

19 Scribner, Religion and Culture in Germany, 129.
“manfully and sensually.” In Zwingli’s mind, these types of sensual images incite lust rather than piety. The Holy Council certainly knew that this needed to be addressed, particularly in light of the uproar caused by what many claimed to be the “indecorous” nature of Michelangelo’s Last Judgment (Sistine Chapel, Vatican). The bishops were thus cited as the “watchguards” against anything improper. Furthermore, images displaying anything profane, new iconographic subjects, or disorderly and confused compositions were prohibited to be placed in churches. The general guidelines outlined in the Tridentine decree on images directly addressed the problems with maniera style, the highly artificial and intellectual style that emerged in Florence during the 1520s, and that continued to prevail throughout Italy even in 1563. Truth, purity, piety, simplicity, and clarity were declared to be the integral qualities of sacred imagery; qualities that clearly counter the complexity, artificiality, and intellectualism of maniera art.

The threat of Protestants and their ideas infiltrating the Italian peninsula and rending the tenuous fabric of Catholicism was, by 1563, fast becoming an imminent reality. The failure of Catholics and Protestants to settle their doctrinal differences at the

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20 Scribner, Religion and Culture in Germany, 129.

21 Canons and Decrees, 217.

22 Maniera (Mannerism) as a term and period or style designation is still a major point of contention among art historians. Date parameters and characteristics or qualities of maniera style are equally problematic. Nevertheless, I utilize the term throughout this dissertation to reference works of art produced beginning in the 1520s, where distinct formal qualities, particularly, pronounced artificiality, are evident and can be distinguished from the classically-inspired works of High Renaissance artists, such as Raphael. For a review of the history of the debate over maniera, see Liana De Girolami Cheney, “Introduction: Stylistic Problems in Mannerism and Maniera,” in Readings in Italian Mannerism, ed. Liana De Girolami Cheney (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 1-8.
Colloquy of Ratisbon in 1541, the flight of Bernardino Ochino, vicar general of the Capuchins, to the Protestant north in 1542, and the publication and dissemination of Protestant-inspired tracts such as the *Beneficio di Cristo* (1543), the *Libro Carolini* (1548), had made it quite clear that the Catholic Church needed to implement a plan in order to reassert the integrity of the Catholic hierarchy, doctrine, and tradition. The issue of images, in particular their function and utility, was one of the primary points of contention between Protestants and Catholics. Images were not only an integral part of Catholic tradition, but they were the cornerstones of Catholic rituals, ceremonies, and doctrine. The removal or destruction of images would not only have undermined the power wielded by the Church, but it would have also eliminated an important political, social and religious vehicle for the propagation of Catholic faith and the supremacy of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The decree on images formulated in the final session of the Council Trent, therefore, placed great emphasis on the issues of idolatry and of lasciviousness, the two primary charges lodged by Protestants against sacred imagery. The validation of images, although resorting to the traditional justification for images used in the *Biblia pauperum*, and as *memoria*, and of *excitatio*, in fact, held an important significance. This validation drew from the *Ars Poetica*, in which Horace declared that the poet, through his words, had the power to delight (*dilettare*), to teach (*insegnare*), and to move (*commovere*). In appropriating the same functions employed for dignifying poets, defenders of images and the Holy Council insisted on the superiority of images over words. A critical advantage of images over the spoken and written word was that both the literate and illiterate could universally understand them; that is, words spoken or
read necessitated knowledge of vocabulary, its meanings, and its construction. In this
clever counter-argument, Catholic apologists were able to counter the Protestants reliance
on only the Word. Images were independently useful, but more importantly, so as not to
undermine the authority of Scriptures, they could be utilized as a tool in conjunction with
sermons and passages read and spoken from the Bible. It was the claim of the universality
of images, their ability to teach and spiritually move the illiterate and uneducated that
eventually led to a redirection in artistic style and to the doctrine of naturalism, which
pervades Post-Tridentine treatises on the visual arts.
CHAPTER 2
PALEOTTI'S DISCORSO AND THE THEOLOGY OF NATURE

The Council of Trent’s decree on images offered a resolute and unambiguous response to Protestant criticism of the Catholic utilization of sacred art. The Tridentine decree both validated and defended the function of images through their cultic role – rejecting outright the Protestant charge of idolatry – and their didactic and affective efficacy for the Catholic populace. The pronouncements from the final session of the Council of Trent also made clear that the Church in Rome would not tolerate any doctrinal or artistic transgressions that would give the Protestants further reason to attack their cherished traditions regarding sacred images. This stance prompted an overt reformatory language in subsequent art writing. In Dolce’s 1557 dialogue L’Aretino, for example, the interlocutors debate at length the decorousness of Michelangelo’s Last Judgment. Similar issues of decorum appear in Giorgio Vasari’s (1511-1574) 1568 edition of Le Vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti. Vasari, for instance,

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1 Dolce, “L’Aretino,” 163-67; Pietro Aretino, one of the interlocutors in Dolce’s dialogue, was especially relentless on the subject of the decorum of Michelangelo’s Last Judgment. Aretino took offense with various aspects of Michelangelo’s fresco, in particular, the quantity of nudes, deeming it “unworthy of this place (Sistine Chapel) of great sanctity” and the profundities of meaning.

2 Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects (1568 ed.), 2 vols., trans. Gaston du C. De Vere (1912; reprint, New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996). In the Life of Fra Angelico, for instance, Vasari, having just emphasized the piousness of Angelico, asserted that painters who execute religious subjects should be “religious and holy men.” Vasari continues, in the same biography, with the assertion that “persons of little faith, who have little esteem for religion . . . often arouse in men’s minds evil appetites and licentious desires.” It is clear that Vasari’s words were instigated by the Council of Trent’s decree (1563), for these comments do not appear in the 1550 edition of his Lives. See Vasari, Lives, vol. 1, trans. De Vere, 408-09; and Vasari, Le Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue, insino a’ tempi
adamantly made it known to his readers that he did not approve of flagrant nudity in works of art found in churches. The general nature of the Council of Trent’s decree on images also sparked the publication of a series of Counter-Reformatory treatises that addressed style in sacred painting, something that the Tridentine decree neglected to undertake. Between 1564 and 1652, seven Counter-Reformatory treatises dealing particularly with sacred painting were published in Italy, four by ecclesiastics, two by members of the Jesuit order, and one by a layman. The publication of such treatises began in 1564, when Giovanni Andrea Gilio (before 1550-1580) published his Degli errori. It was, however, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti’s 1582 Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane that had the most extensive and far-reaching influence on sacred style for the next millennium. Paleotti and the authority of his Discorso provided the definitive direction for sacred style which would later prove formative on the evolution of the religious works of Caravaggio and his contemporaries beginning in the last decade of the Cinquecento and continuing through the mid-Seicento.


Paleotti’s Predecessor: Gilio’s *Degli errori*

The decorum of Michelangelo’s monumental fresco was already a heated topic among prelates, artists, critics, and detractors of the artist soon after its completion in 1541. In 1564, however, just one year after the closing of the final session of the Council of Trent, a fresh, vigorous attack emerged from the Dominican theologian Giovanni Andrea Gilio when he published his *Degli errori* in which Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* was made the quintessential example of impropriety in sacred imagery. In Gilio’s opinion, Michelangelo’s fresco exhibited everything that the Tridentine decree on images stipulated as inappropriate and reprehensible in sacred images: licentiousness, nudity, disorderliness and confusion, and the inclusion of the profane.\(^5\) Gilio’s concern centered primarily on the effects a sacred image such as Michelangelo’s would have on the illiterate and uneducated populace through the exhibition of things contrary to the Catholic faith, piety and decorum. The private function of the chapel may have limited the demographics of the audience; it did not impede, however, the wide dissemination of copies and prints of the fresco.\(^6\) This diffusion probably only heightened Gilio’s ire, for in 1564, the *maniera* style continued to prevail, and Gilio, having taken his cues from the Tridentine decree on images, made his polemical stand against the style, and against the painter he saw as its progenitor, Michelangelo.

\(^5\) *Canons and Decrees*, 214-17.

Gilio’s dialogue, while centering primarily on the abuses in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, contains several significant comments, easily overlooked, that indicate a more suitable path that artists should pursue in painting sacred themes. The point of departure for the lengthy diatribe on Michelangelo’s fresco was, in fact, the topic of nature. Gilio locates the dialogue in the fall of 1561, describing in minute detail the setting: the temperature, scents, and the colors of the trees, plants, and flowers. It is the beauty of nature that inspires one of the interlocutors, Vincenzo, to pose the following question: “What painter could never obtain [in painting] so much of the natural, that [it] resembles reality?”  

Another participant, Polidoro, responds with the opinion that one cannot find paintings executed naturalistically, to which Vincenzo, in agreement, added that today there are no artists who demonstrate naturalism in painting. Contemporary art, in the interlocutors’ opinions, abounds in artificiality that demonstrates the ingenuity of the artist. It was these observations that instigated the discussion of Michelangelo, whom Ruggiero seemed to blame for the current lack of decorum in sacred imagery: “And it seems to me that the painters who came before Michelangelo attended more to truth and devotion, than to pomp.”  

In Gilio’s opinion, it seemed that in contemporary *maniera* style, stemming from Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, the brazen display of the

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7 Gilio, *Degli errori*, 10: “Qual pittore mai potrebbe ricavarli tanto del naturale, che rassimigliassero ai veri?”

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 55: “E mi pare che i pittori che furono avanti Michelagnolo più a la verità et a la devozione attendessero, che a la pompa.”
“excellence of art” and artistic skill took precedence over the truth and piousness of sacred subjects.

The “excellence of art” or “artfulness” which Gilio remarks upon seems to point directly to the maniera artists’ deliberate departure from nature, a style and practice antithetical to the truth that Gilio sought. One could argue that the advocation for imitation of nature in art was not exclusive to Gilio or the late Cinquecento. The predilection of and estimation for the “natural” in painting also figured largely in Vasari’s Vite (1568 ed.) where the third generation of artists, which included Vasari’s maniera contemporaries, were given the highest praise for having conquered and surpassed nature. It is necessary to underscore here, however, that Vasari’s view and treatment of the “natural” and the imitation of nature differed significantly from the manner in which they were defined and described by Gilio and other Counter-Reformation theorists. The “artfulness” that Gilio observed and condemned in the works of Michelangelo and his contemporaries can and should be equated to Vasari’s attribution of the “perfected” nature achieved in the works of third-generation artists. Vasari does not refer to an empirical brand of naturalism, but rather, a refined, improved naturalism in which the artist’s imagination and intellect play a decisive role. For instance, the high estimation of draftsmanship in the third age was founded upon the artist’s ability to “perfect” and “surpass” nature herself. Beauty was achieved by the assimilation of the most beautiful parts of figures and objects, and not by imitating them as they appear in nature.

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To be sure, the ancient and Renaissance theories and practices of imitation were in themselves contradictory to the definition of the word. It is to this tradition that Vasari’s “perfected” nature referred. E. H. Gombrich pointed to the Renaissance appropriation of the flexible usage and meaning of imitation by ancient authors, such as Quintilian and Seneca: “Quintilian opposed the mechanical imitation of one model of style, and Seneca found the formula – frequently repeated – that the imitator must transform his material as the bee transforms nectar into honey, or as the body assimilates its nourishment.”¹¹ Even in ancient literary discourse, “imitation” did not translate into a narrow definition of mere copying, but rather the transformation of a work beyond the original. Early Renaissance humanists such as Petrarch further elaborated on this tradition: “He who imitates must have care that what he writes be similar, not identical [with his model], and that the similarity should not be of the kind that obtains between a portrait and a sitter.”¹² The critical point of distinction between the maniera and Counter-Reformation interpretations of imitation and naturalism is made in their respective ideas of appropriate models and the degrees of artistic manipulation. For Vasari, the appropriate models of imitation were antique and modern works of art. The maniera practice of imitation of nature was one filtered second-hand through antique and modern exemplars and not the original: nature itself. According to Philip Sohm, Vasari pointed to a “definition of maniera as ideal imitation where the goal of style is to reform the


diversity of nature into a single idea or ideal form . . . Style as an ideal form contains the seeds of its own demise.”

Natural semblance in maniera style and theory was twice removed from the empirical observation of nature. In Vasari, the objective of surpassing and conquering nature, as well as the works of both the ancients and early generations of Renaissance artists, indeed, demanded extreme departures from empirical observation, calling upon the ingenuity, intellect, and skill of the artist to impart beauty, grace, refinement and perfection not seen in nature.

Gilio’s position on imitation reverted to a more truthful reflection of nature, purged of the excessive artificiality of maniera style. The artist thus errs when he does not paint a Christ deformed in images of his Passion, but rather the delicacy and beauty of his body. A perfect, beautiful, graceful body of a flagellated or crucified Christ was not only inimical to Scriptural truth and to the laws of nature, but it also failed to move the viewer emotionally and spiritually. Gilio thus made a compromise between the old and new styles, proposing a regola mescolanza or “mixed rule,” a style that combined artistry with ancient devotion. Gilio’s regola mescolanza acknowledged the need for artistic manipulation and skill to achieve a critical affective connection with viewers, while simultaneously being aware of the precarious boundary that separated artifice from “artfulness.” The visible, obvious displays of artistry posed an inherent danger in their


potential to undermine and supersede the meaning and significance of the sacred subject. The artist’s skill or artifice should be directed toward the imitation of nature and truth as explicated and required by Scriptural texts and the laws of nature, and not “perfected” nature where “artfulness” for its own sake could and often was exploited. For Gilio, the artist, when painting scenes of Christ’s Passion, should demonstrate his skill and the power of art in truthful depictions of Christ “afflicted, bloody, covered in spit, deplelted, festered, deformed, bruised and ugly”\(^{16}\) rather than through artful demonstrations of refinement, grace, delicacy, and beauty. The maniera style divorced form from content, and encouraged the transmutation of artifice to “artfulness,” towards the vaunting and demonstration of artistic ingenuity, rather than directing artistic skill toward the simple task of imitating nature “artificially.”

The skill of painting naturalistically, for Gilio, was the true mark of artistic ingenuity, the power and virtue of art, of decorum, and the perfection of artifice.\(^{17}\) The “pomp” and “artfulness” of maniera style was also closely aligned to Vasari’s notion of facility. Modern masters, according to Vasari, were superior to their predecessors, in their ability to veil the awkwardness of figures in nature, with “sweet and facile grace.”\(^{18}\)

\(^{16}\) Gilio, Degli errori, 40: “afflitto, sanguinoso, pieno di sputi, depelato, piagato, difformato, livido e brutto.”

\(^{17}\) Ibid.: This is expressed by M. Troilo in response to painting scenes of Christ’s Passion. “Molto più mostrerebbe il pittore la forza de l’arte in farlo afflitto, sanguinoso, pieno di sputi, depelato, piagato, difformato, livido e brutto, di maniera che non avesse forma d’uomo. Questo sarebbe l’ingegno, questa la forza e la virtù de l’arte, questo il decoro, questa la perfezzion de l’artefice . . . .”

superiority of artists from Vasari’s generation were also supported by the fact that “early masters took six years to paint one panel” while “our modern masters can paint six in one year.”

Gilio countered the Vasarian and maniera notion that privileged estimation of facility in artistic execution by demanding that the artist adhere to a meticulous working method, through the execution of sketches, studies, and the careful consideration of the subject. Gilio argued that the artists of his generation should work slowly and cautiously, and must give themselves appropriate time to set and correct his compositions.

For Gilio, maniera style posed a significant threat to the edification of illiterate or ignorant viewers. As the Council of Trent decree on images indicated and as Gilio reiterated in his dialogue, “painting is nothing more than history for the ignorant,” and this required that the painter “show the pure and simple truth.” The truth to which Gilio’s interlocutors refer was not only the historical truth of sacred Scriptures, but also representational accuracy, or truth to nature. A viewer cannot learn, for instance, from paintings that depict beautiful figures of the flagellated Christ, which do not show the physical and emotional effects of the action. Viewers would neither understand nor feel the pain that Christ suffered without seeing his violated body naturally depicted. The viewer’s pain depended upon and mirrored that which was represented and experienced by the figure portrayed. Maniera artists exemplified a style that was the antithesis of naturalism, and as Troilo questioned, “If art is the ape of nature, why shouldn’t this

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20 Gilio, Degli errori, 29.

21 Ibid., 24.
Actions, gestures, and emotions must reflect what one would see in the real world, stated Francesco, for “art imitates nature, and not nature [from] art.”

Gilio acknowledged the need for a new rule or standard for sacred art, and admired the ancient traditions of honest and devout images. In contrast to ancient artists, \textit{maniera} artists placed art before truth, painted nude rather than clothed figures, and replaced devotion with forceful manipulation, twisting heads, arms and legs. The customs of ancient art were, according to Gilio, altered and ruined by the “fancy of modern painters.” Gilio clearly preferred a form of archaism, a pre-\textit{maniera} style, which exhibited the simplicity, truthfulness, and piety of the past. Ancient paintings may appear “vile, clumsy, plebian, old, humble, without genius and art” to modern eyes, but what the ancients did succeed in expressing was something even more important: honest, sincere devotion. Gilio proposed that a compromise between the old and new was the appropriate solution, a \textit{regola mescolanza}, combining artistry with ancient devotion. The restoration of traditional piety into sacred painting would conveniently restrict the artistry by its requirement for a more direct and affective connection with the viewer. The exaggerated gestures, contorted poses, crowded compositions, and the \textit{cangianti} colors of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{22} Gilio, \textit{Degli errori}, 41: “Se l’arte è scimia de la natura, perché non deve in questo imitarla?”
\item \textbf{23} Ibid., 48-49: “l’arte imita la natura, e non la natura l’arte.”
\item \textbf{24} Ibid., 111.
\item \textbf{25} Ibid., 110.
\item \textbf{26} Ibid.: “. . . vile, goffo, plebeo, antico, umile, senza ingegno et arte.”
\end{itemize}
**maniera** style threatened to alienate viewers from what they were viewing, distancing them from any emotional connection. A tangible presence was in order, and which painting “from nature” (*dal naturale*) could most effectively and affectively fulfill. The idea of *presence* was derived from the symbolic and spiritual meaning of Early Christian icons where the visual manifestation of a sacred figure represented and presented a special reality and significance. It was a quality that Hans Belting in his seminal work *Likeness and Presence*, asserted was destroyed by the introduction of techniques and artful effects of the Renaissance, which removed the sanctity and special reality of sacred images.\(^{27}\) Gilio’s *regola mescolanza*, indeed, signified his longing for a return to the ancient ideas of the iconic proto-type, while simultaneously understanding that “artful” techniques had the potential to create a more powerful and affective *presence*.\(^{28}\) The painter’s skill should now be demonstrated through truthful imitation, which in many ways, was infinitely more challenging, for a painting’s success depended upon persuading the viewer of tangible figures and scenes. For Gilio, pretense must concede to truth, as darkness to light.\(^{29}\)

Gilio’s *Degli errori* formed an important foundation and point of departure for the Counter-Reformatory theorists who followed closely on his heels. Artists were to be

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\(^{28}\) Ibid.; See also Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Nagel further investigates the ideas of *presence*, and in particular the significance of frontality or *prosopopeia* in imbuing authenticity and piety in sacred images.

\(^{29}\) Gilio, *Degli errori*, 67.
merely recorders, not translators, of sacred themes. They were to direct their skill in conveying scriptural truth and truth to nature, rather than insinuating their ingenuity and artistry for purposes of demonstrating their creative abilities. For Vasari, the artist as “maker” of works of art could be equated with God as divine creator.\textsuperscript{30} We find in the treatises of Gilio’s successors, however, particularly Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, that the artist could only be associated with God in his ability to replicate or record his creation: nature. The Vasarian conception of the artist as artist-creator was thus transformed into the notion of the artist as mere recorder of God’s creations, and the artist’s work as a product of his creative powers that served as a mirror of divine creation. The creative command of the artist now needed to be focused toward underscoring the sacred subject through simplicity, clarity, and the affective power of truth to nature. The genius of the artist was now proven through his capacity to persuade and affect viewers’ emotions through tangible and truthful presences by means of tempered artifice.

\textit{Paleotti’s Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane}

Eighteen years following the publication of Gilio’s \textit{Degli errori}, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti (1522-97) published in Bologna his own Counter-Reformatory treatise the \textit{Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane} in 1582 (Fig. 1).\textsuperscript{31} Paleotti having received his degrees in both Civil and Canon Law at the University of Bologna (1546),


\textsuperscript{31} Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}; A second edition was published in Latin at the request of Pope Clement VIII in 1594.
was a professor and spiritual guide to both Ippolito Aldobrandini (the future Pope Clement VIII) and Federico Borromeo (later cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca, Rome, and Archbishop of Milan). The relationship between Paleotti and his two young students, forged in the early years of his career, would continue until his death in 1597. Paleotti also held several important positions within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, including Auditor of the Sacred Roman Rota (1556), Canon Consultant of the Legates in the final sessions of the Council of Trent (1561-63), one of three members of the newly created Congregation of the Council to implement the Tridentine decrees, Cardinal (promoted on 12 March 1565), and Archbishop of Bologna (10 February 1566).  

It is uncertain when Paleotti began writing his Discorso, but by 1578 the first draft was completed and sent to various advisors for review, including the Jesuit Francesco Pal mio (January 1578), and the Archbishop of Milan Carlo Borromeo (1579, 1581). Paleotti also sought the advice of individuals from various disciplines: Pietro Tossignano, the Abbot Egidio of S. Procolo, the Vatican Library scholar Guglielmo Sirleto, the jurist Giovanni Angelo Papio, the philosopher Federico Pendasio, the historian Carlo Sigorio, the naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi, the antiquarian Pirro Ligorio, and the artists Prospero Fontana and Domenico Tibaldi. The number and variety of the consultants sought by

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33 Prodi, “Ricerche sulla teorica,” 143.

34 Ibid., 143-45.
Paleotti reflect the wide scope of his Discorso, which was to include five books, of which only two were completed and published.

The first book focused on the general subject of painting (both sacred and profane), and the second, on the abuses in specific genres and themes. Both books are replete with references aimed directly toward the advocation of nature, naturalism, liveliness, and tangible presence in sacred painting. While Gilio’s Degli errori certainly served as the foundation for the Discorso, it is my conviction that Paleotti’s treatise is unequivocally the paradigm to which all subsequent Counter-Reformatory theorists would refer, and to which artists themselves would have been most exposed. Paleotti’s Discorso fully and emphatically articulated a reformulated canon of sacred painting style based on naturalism, which ultimately reflected the author’s theology of nature.

According to the “Proemio” and the “Alcuni Avvertimenti,” Paleotti’s 1582 Discorso was not intended to be disseminated widely, but rather to serve his own diocese in Bologna. Nevertheless, early drafts of the treatise had reached the hands of the Cardinal’s associates and contemporaries, in not only Bologna, but also as far north as Milan, and south to Rome. Whatever his intentions, the treatise’s realm of influence and its accessibility was not isolated to Bologna. In fact, even Paleotti’s significant decision to write his treatise in the vernacular predisposes a much wider circulation, in terms of

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35 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, “Proemio,” 2r; and Libro 1, “Alcuni Avvertimenti a chi leggerà il presente discorso,” 1v: “Ricordiamo ancora che questo trattato per ordine di Monsignore Illustris[simo] Vescovo è stato composto per uso del popolo della città, e diocese sua . . . .”

36 This is established primarily through letters between Paleotti and the advisors he consulted who read early drafts of the Discorso. See p. 27 above, and Prodi, “Ricerche sulla teorica,” 143-45.
demographics. Unlike his predecessor Gilio who dedicated his *Degli errori* to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Paleotti offered his *Discorso* as a gift to the populace of his city and diocese.\(^{37}\) Thus, the treatise was written in the vernacular, with Latin texts only for supporting quotes from the Bible, past Councils, Church Fathers, and theologians. Paleotti’s treatise, in fact, was written in a very clear language, often reiterating specific statements in order to make his point plain. In the two published books of his *Discorso*, Paleotti not only took into consideration the role of ecclesiastics, but also patrons, collectors, and artists. He placed the blame for abuses in images not solely on the artist, as Gilio had blamed Michelangelo for the indecorousness of his *Last Judgment*, but principally on the shoulders of patrons and collectors who commissioned the decoration for churches and for their own homes.\(^{38}\) Paleotti’s prescriptions for artists are clear and effective, and it is in these passages that he acknowledges yet another audience for his *Discorso*, one infinitely more important than the others: Christian viewers. Paleotti may appear intransigent and dogmatic if one were to take a cursory glance at his *Discorso*, however, the Cardinal made many concessions to artistic license as long as a more effective sacred image, both didactically and affectively, was the result. It is Paleotti’s consideration of the spectator that separates his treatise from his predecessor, Gilio. It

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\(^{37}\) See Gilio’s Dedicatory letter to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Gilio, *Degli errori*, 3-4; and title page and “Proemio” to the *Discorso*.

\(^{38}\) Paleotti, *Discorso*, “Alcuni Avvertimenti,” 1r: “Però si è havuta considerazione in questo trattato di ragionare non solo con li pittori, & scoltori; ma principalmente con li Curati, & con li nobili, & persone honorate, che sogliono abbellire le chiese, & le loro abitazioni con simili ornamenti.”
was within this context that we can understand the function and Paleotti’s method of thinking in writing his Discorso and in formulating his “theology of nature.”

In both books, the singular role of painters as imitators of nature was clearly underscored. Truth was paramount in the representation of sacred themes. In addition to Scripture, according to Paleotti, nature was deemed another form of truth.39 It is unquestionable that Gilio’s 1564 Degli errori served as the point of departure for Paleotti’s Discorso, and that both prelates shared an interest in a style based on “truth to nature.” Paleotti’s treatise, however, emphasized the “imitation of nature” to such an extent that it forms the backbone of his Discorso. The basis for the advocation of a naturalistic style derives from a twofold objective: first, to uphold and enforce the Tridentine norms established to counter and prevent further Protestant attacks on the legitimacy and efficacy of the Catholic use of sacred images;40 and second, to set into motion a means of transforming sacred style into a more suitable, pious, and affective vehicle to reach the general populace.

39 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, “Alcuni Avvertimenti,” 1r: “Di qui è adunque che in molti capi si è proceduto alquanto scientificamente e con concetti di dottrina, avendosi riguardo ai nobili ingegni, per meglio stabirlì nella verità.”

40 Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 24, “Altre ragioni per dimostrare il giovamento, che si cava dalle christiane imagini per istruttione del popolo,” 75r-75v. Paleotti not only addressed many of the criticisms lodged by the Protestants, particularly the issue of idolatry, but he even went as far as to name these so-called “heretics”: John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and John Calvin. “... quelle delle heresiarchi, come di Vucleffo, di Martino, di Melanctone, di Calvino & altri, ma solo la rabbia & furore contro quell del sanno Iddio & de suoi santi, perche sono approvate dalla santa chiesa catholica & apostolica.”
As was the case in Gilio’s 1564 Degli errori, Paleotti’s Discorso made clear that the deficiencies of contemporary maniera style were the primary impetus for seeking a reformulation of the canon in sacred painting. The artful displays of maniera artists posed a serious problem to the education and faith of the Catholic population, by placing “art” before devotion. For this very reason, Paleotti proposed a style based on nature as the new proper standard for sacred imagery; in short, a style that was the antithesis of maniera. He substantiated this course for sacred style through the idea of nature as a manifestation of God’s divine creation. Deviation from nature, in essence, disrupted the theological hierarchy by placing man-made objects above God’s creation, and inserted the artist as creator of art over God, the divine creator of nature. Furthermore, artifice, which demonstrated the creativity and the skill of the artist, removed the primacy that the sacred personages and subjects portrayed in paintings should, and deserved, to hold. By casting the Christian painter exclusively as an imitator of nature, Paleotti destroyed the time-honored recognition of the painter as creator (of art), thereby eliminating the artists’ tendency to equate themselves with God-Creator. Christian painters were thus bound to record only what they observed – nature – and with this limitation, the threat of an over-active imagination, of artistic fancy and capricious inclusions were curtailed. Throughout Books One and Two, Paleotti underscored nature as evidence of God’s divine hand and providence. In order to paint a sacred image, the Christian painter must possess the purest intention to serve God and not his art. Therefore, Paleotti demanded that the artist must offer his hands as sacrifice to God, thus relinquishing his creative and imaginative
powers.\textsuperscript{41} Despite the demand for the artists to surrender their creative powers, he privileged the painter for his ability to as imitate and represent the same works that God had fabricated with his own hands.\textsuperscript{42}

Paleotti’s \textit{Discorso} is written in what can be called a “naturalistic language”, replete with words such as, truth, nature, imitation, similitude, verisimilitude, natural, lively, and real. In Paleotti’s mind, painting derives its esteemed status “principally from represented likeness.”\textsuperscript{43} For Paleotti, verisimilitude was the primary and important stylistic requirement for paintings, particularly those of sacred subjects:

The end of painting is to resemble the represented thing, which some call the spirit of painting, because all other things, such as beauty, variety of colors and other ornaments, are accessory to it; whereby Aristotle said in the Poetics that, of two paintings, that which is full of beautiful color, but does not resemble, is considered inferior to that which is formed with simple lines and resembles; and the reason is, because the former contains an accident of the painting and the latter embraces that which is the foundation and nerve of it, which consists in the good expression of that which we want to imitate.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}, Libro 1, Capitolo 7, “Che l’arte del formare le imagini, christianamente essercitata, riesce nobilissima,” 28v-29r: “. . . che a lui siano state offerte come sacrificio delle mani nostre, perché quando a questo fine sono dirizzare, egli subito le adorna & le imprime il carattere della celeste nobilità . . . .”

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 3, “Delle cose, che in ciascuna imagine concorrono da considerarsi,” 13v.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 6, “Se l’arte di formare le imagini, si hà numerare tra le nobili, ò ignobili,” 23v: “. . . non dipendendo la vera nobiltà di queste arti del formare le imagini, nè dalla materia, nè dal luogo, nè da i colori, nè d’altra simile circostanza, ma principalmente dalla somiglianza rappresentata . . . .”

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 18, “Perche siano state introdotte le imagini sacre nel popolo Christiano,” 63r-63v: “Il fine della pittura sarà l’assomigliare la cosa rappresentata, che alcun chiamano l’anima della pittura, perché tutte l’altre cose, come la vaghezza, varietà de’colori et altri ornamenti, sono ancessorie ad essa; onde disse Aristotele nella Poetica che, di due pittura, quella che sarà piena di bei colori, ma non
By this reasoning, the beautiful *cangianti* colors of *maniera* works could not outweigh or replace the value of verisimilitude in sacred painting. Part of Paleotti’s emphasis during the late Cinquecento may be interpreted as a direct response to the artificial style of *maniera* artists, which provided the major repertoire of errors deemed inappropriate by the Council of Trent and post-Trent theorists. Paleotti too, as Gilio before him, addressed numerous errors found in contemporary paintings, which, although never implicitly stated, refer to works executed in the *maniera* style. Abuses Paleotti particularly singled out included exaggeration of body proportions, disjunctions in scale, and decentralization of the main subject, which now call to mind *maniera* works of art.

Many of the abuses Paleotti found in paintings revolved around deviations from Scriptural truth, but in many ways, were also intricately connected with the precept of truth to nature, as they departed from the visible truth of God’s order and creation. It was improper, for instance, to depict a woman with a Herculean body, or the flagellated Christ with a pristine body, devoid of marks. Disjointed or incongruous proportions in figures and objects were also inappropriate, as when an artist paints birds the size of elephants, men the size of dwarfs, or when various things are positioned on the same ground plane and are identical in size. Artists, according to Paleotti, should also avoid disjunctions between figures and the space they occupy, as when one depicts a huge

assomiglierà, sarà stimata inferiore a quella che sarà formata di semplici linee et assomiglierà; e la ragione è, perché quella contiene uno accidente della pittura e questa abbraccia quello che è il fondamento e nervo di essa, che consiste nella esprimere bene quello che vogliamo imitare.”

45 Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 2, Capitolo 26, “Delle pitture non verisimili,” 179r.

46 Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 28, “Delle pitture sproportionate,” 185v-186r.
seated figure in a small space, such that if the figure stood he would hit his head on the upper edge.\textsuperscript{47} Correct age relationships between figures should also be observed. It is against Scriptural truth and reason, to depict the youthful Virgin with a mature dead Christ in her arms (once again a clear reference to Michelangelo, specifically his St. Peter’s \textit{Pietà}).\textsuperscript{48} The issue at hand was comprehensibility. The sacred work should be simple, free of Scriptural error, and understandable. Indeed, what was easily comprehensible to the viewer was the familiar: things from the natural world; people that looked like real people with corporeal bodies; trees, plants, flowers and objects that one sees everyday within nature. Anything that went against Scriptural, natural or rational laws posed a threat of being confusing, misleading, or utterly incomprehensible. Paleotti, however, makes numerous exceptions in sacred picture making, particularly for artistic choices in representing things not recorded in the Bible. Narrative embellishments were permissible as long as they did not deviate from or distort sacred rites, customs, or traditions of the Catholic Church, and especially if they ultimately contributed to moving the emotions of the viewer. Thus, depicting the unrecorded lament of the Virgin or the harshness of the flagellation were acceptable as they moved the emotions, excited devotion, and softened the hearts of viewers.\textsuperscript{49} Even additions that may not have a direct

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{47} Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}, Libro 2, Capitolo 28, “Delle piture sproportionate,” 187r-187v.}\n
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 186r.}\n
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 3, “Delle piture sacre che peccano in materia di fede, & prima, delle piture dette temerarie,” 109r: “... che non si trovano scritte negli Evangelisti come de i lamenti della Madonna, de i prieghi lunghi fatti da N. S. nella}
bearing on moving or exciting devotion were acceptable if they were probable, or in verisimilar terms. Thus, it did not matter if the Virgin was walking, sitting or reclining when greeted by the Archangel Gabriel in scenes of the Annunciation.\textsuperscript{50} It was acceptable to show the Virgin traveling on a donkey with the Christ Child in her arms in paintings of the Flight into Egypt despite the silence of the Gospels on their mode of transportation.\textsuperscript{51} It was likewise permissible to depict St. Paul falling from a horse in the Conversion of St. Paul regardless of the fact that it was uncertain whether Paul was on foot or on his horse during this episode of divine enlightenment.\textsuperscript{52} The urgency to reach the Catholic faithful, particularly the unlettered, was foremost on Paleotti’s mind. To this end, painters needed to utilize a style that was simple, pious, understandable, and natural. In the Discorso, the need to reach the “everyday” Christian dovetailed with Paleotti’s other fundamental principles: the interconnection of the universality of painting, nature as God’s divine creation, and a naturalistic style, purged of maniera caprice.

A naturalistic style was critical to sacred painting because of the critical need and desire to connect and reach the Christian populace. Throughout the Discorso, Paleotti refers not only to the general populace (popolo), but also to the divergent classes of the population: men, women, the noble, the learned, and particularly the ignoble, the poor, oratione nell’horto, della acerbità de’flagelli, delle parole obbrobriose usateli da’ Giudei, & simili altre cose che raccontano, per muovere più l’affetto & intenerire il cuore.”

\textsuperscript{50} Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 2, Capitolo 9, “Delle pitture apocrife,” 120r-120v.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 120v.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
and the idiots (idioti). In fact, Paleotti identified four levels or professions of people: the painters, the lettered (i letterati), the spiritual, and the idiots. He refers to the latter group most frequently, which he surmised were the major part of the population and the ones for whom sacred painting was principally introduced. The designation of idioti, however, does not imply a modern connotation for “idiots,” but rather the common man, the unlearned (indotti). It is in this context that Paleotti drew from a familiar trope: the paragone between books and paintings. Painting was universal, a “communal language” (linguaggio commune) that could be comprehended by every class of people. Throughout the Discorso, Paleotti underscored the long-standing position famously proclaimed by Pope Gregory the Great in the sixth century that images functioned primarily as a “bible for the illiterate” (Biblia Pauperum). Images in churches were intended to aid the

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53 Palotti, Discorso, Libro 2, Capitolo 52, “Conclusione di quello che principalmente si giudica necessario, affine che le cose che si dipingono, siano da tutti commendate,” 275v-276r: “. . . che si venessero ad abbracciare quattro gradi o professioni di persone, che sono i pittori, i letterati, gl’idioti, e gli spirituali, come appresso si dichiarerà: a’ quali quando le pitture sodisfacessero, si potria dire che havessero insieme in certo modo il consenso universale del popolo.” In Paleotti’s text, the general populace (popolo) is made up of the ignorant (idioti, indotti, etc.), so the two were interchangeable. He also utilized popolo christiano (Christian populace), popolo fedele (faithful populace), huomini (men), spettatore (spectator), but even in these cases, when the context in which they are placed is taken into consideration, even these designations refer to the general populace. Popolari (popular) also appears, but infrequently, in Paleotti’s text. This term also references the general populace as it is framed within the parameters of general comprehensibility; sometimes utilized in the context of images as libro popolare (popular book). Out of all the terms, however, popolo appears most frequently.

54 Ibid.: “. . . gl’idioti, che è la maggior parte del popolo, per servitio de’ quali principalmente furono introdotte le pitture sacre . . . .”
illiterate, to “read by seeing on the walls what they cannot read in books.”

Gregory’s notion of the didactic function of images was restated more emphatically in the Tridentine decree, wherein the Council strongly condemned the representation of false doctrines as they may “be the occasion of grave error to the uneducated.”

Books can be read and comprehended only by the intelligent, whereas painting, according to Paleotti, can be universally embraced by every sort of person. Moreover, paintings not only served the illiterate, but as a communal language, it could be embraced by every nation.

Reading books required knowledge of language (Greek, Latin, etc.), the talent to understand, and the ability to learn that is restricted to the educated and the intelligent.

Truth to nature, a reflection of the everyday world and everyday experience thus served as the universal language in painting. Universal comprehensibility was Paleotti’s primary concern and it was especially the service of painting for the larger Christian populace that

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56 *Canons and Decrees*, 215-17.

57 Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 1, Capitolo 5, “Se la introduttione delle imagini sia stata anteriore a i libri, & che convenienza habbia conessi,” 19v: “. . . le pitture possono esprimere quello che i libri contengono; perciò che i libri sono letti solo da gl’intelligenti, che sono pochi, ma le pitture abbracciano universalmente tutte le sorti di persone.”; Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 51, “Di alcuni avertisimenti generali posti da gli autori, da osservarsi in ciascuna pittura, perché sodisfaccia universalmente,” 272v: “. . . che la pittura, la quale hà da servire ad huomini, donne, nobili, ignobili, ricchi, poveri, dotti, indotti, & ad ogn’un in qualche parte, essendo ella il libro popolare . . . .”

58 Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 4, “Della origine delle imagini in universale,” 14r: “Dunque per sodisfare più universalmente a questo desiderio & necessità commune di significare a ciascuno i concetti altrui, fù ritrovata l’arte del formare le imagini, che vedute subito si riconoscono indifferentemente & servono per favella commune a tutte le nationi.”
figured largely in his treatise. Throughout his *Discorso*, Paleotti referred to sacred paintings as “books for the populace” (*libro popolare, libri per lo popolo*), “books for the idiots” (*libri degli idioti*), and “Scriptures for the people” (*Scrittura popolare*).

The significance of truth to nature in painting was tied to the desire to build an affective communication between painting and viewer, a means of bridging the distance (lontananza) – mental, physical, and psychological - between the past and the present, the known and the unknowable, God and man. Similitude served as a substitute for the original, which is separated from us through the defect of distance or absence.\(^{59}\) A painting quickly renders things present to the eyes of the populace. It has the ability to change a room, making things by turns distant or absent, present and tangible.\(^{60}\) The connection between painting and viewer was paramount to Paleotti who urged the artist to pair religious truths with a naturalistic painting style. Nature and naturalism captivated the senses, particularly the faculty of sight, and functioned simultaneously as an antidote to maniera, as a vehicle to communicate with viewers, and to provide a means by which even the idioti may ascend to the divine.

Paleotti drew once again from rhetoric and the *paragone* between books-paintings and orators-painters in order to demonstrate how the everyday Christian could achieve spiritual enlightenment and union with God. Painting was linked to divine knowledge through its capacity to present to the eyes of men every material thing, natural or

\(^{59}\) Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 1, Capitolo 4, “Della origine delle imagini in universale,” 15r.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le Imagini christiane,” 70r: “. . . con la pittura si mutano le loro stanze, & di lontane si fanno presenti . . . .”
artificial, things present, but particularly those things absent.\textsuperscript{61} As the goal of the orator is to persuade his listeners, painters must also strive for the same ends, through delight, instruction, and through the incitement of the emotions.\textsuperscript{62} In the realm of sacred imagery, painters must persuade viewers to embrace the religious content represented, and encourage them to piety, virtue and obedience to God. Paleotti broke down the vehicle of “Delight” into three subcategories: sensuous (animale), rational (razionale), and supernatural (sopranaturale). Sensuous delight was obtained through the senses, with the sense of vision being the most noble. In a very interesting selection of words, Paleotti explained that the nobility of vision is derived from “the variety of colors, for the shadows, for the figures, for the ornaments, and for the diverse things that are represented, such as mountains, rivers, gardens, cities, countries and other things” that can be seen in paintings and received by our eyes.\textsuperscript{63} It is noteworthy that Paleotti here gives precedence to color and shadow, two components integral in the tangible, naturalistic paintings of Lombardy, the relevance of which will be discussed in Chapters Three and Five. The specific inclusion of nature, such as rivers, gardens, and landscapes, further underscore Paleotti’s naturalistic sensibilities. Paleotti’s theology of naturalism  

\textsuperscript{61} Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, Capitolo 4, “Della origine delle imagini in universale,” 15r-15v.  

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 5, “Se la introduttione delle imagini sia stata anteriore a i libri, & che convenienza habbia conessi,” 20v.  

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le imagini christiane,” 69v; “Quanto al senso, è cosa manifestissima a tutti, che essendo il senso del vedere più nobile de gli altri, riceve dalle piture per la varietà de’ colori, per l’ombre, per le figure, per gli ornamenti, & per le cose diverse che si rappresentano, come monti, fiumi, gardini, città, paesi & altre cose, meraviglioso piacere, e ricreazione.”
also embraced rational delight, a concept that likewise derived from the senses, but
continued further through reason and discourse. Essential to reception and experience of
rational delight was imitation: “having been said by the wise, that man among all other
animals was born most apt to imitate, thus by their natural instinct they feel the grandest
delight and pleasure from imitation.” As in poetry, imitation was a necessary principle
for paintings, for it is the imitation of life and truth that brings delight to the viewer. For
Paleotti, imitation involved the rendering of things present to the eyes of men,
particularly those things separated by distance and time. The third delight, supernatural or
spiritual, “transfixes [the viewer] longer than the others,” and considered superior to the
others. These delights connected with the universality of painting, for according to
Paleotti, anyone with “purged eyes” could experience all three delights in Christian
paintings. Imitation of nature in painting served as the quotidian language for the
genral Christian populace. Paleotti adamantly asserted that “There is no doubt that
[paintings] are the most powerful and efficacious instruments when they are made as [if]
alive, which forces itself on the unsuspecting senses” and in fact, “the more closely

64 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le
imagini christiane,” 68r-68v.

65 Ibid., 69v: “. . . essendo detto de’ savii, che si come l’huomo fra tutti gli altri
animali nasce attissimo ad imitare così egli per naturale instinto sente grandissimo diletto,
e gusto della imitatione.”

66 Ibid., 70v.

67 Ibid., 70v-71r.

68 Ibid.
paintings imitate life and truth…, the more they are worthy of praise.”

Paintings thus were praiseworthy if they succeeded in reaching the idioti, through the simple, everyday visual language of naturalism. It is in this capacity that Paleotti proclaimed that Christians could experience these delights, and nature formed the ladder upon which men could scale to the eternal and God.

These “delights” formed but one facet of the function of sacred painting: “the function of Christian painting was not only to delight, but to simultaneously be useful.”

Sacred paintings, had the ability to “be useful” through the vehicle of delight. The delight of the viewers’ senses served as the key that opened the portal to other functions and effects of sacred painting. Instruction and the excitation of the emotions were equally essential in order for a sacred image to be deemed efficacious. Referring once again to the paragone between books and paintings, Paleotti proclaimed that as instruction was communally intended by orators and poets, it follows that instruction was also an integral part of the métier of the painter. Paleotti described painters of sacred images as silent preachers to the populace who could bring universal utility to everyone. Paleotti underscored the fact that images served many of the faithful, who would not comprehend

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69 Respectively, Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, Capitolo 26, “De i vari notabili causati dalle imagini pie, & divote,” 78r: “. . . non è dubbio non ci essere istumento più forte, o più efficace a ciò, delle imagini fatte al vivo, che quasi violentano i sensi incauti,” and Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione che apportano le imagini christiane,” 70v.

70 Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le imagini christiane,” 69r.

71 Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 30, “Delle pitture vane & otiose,” 192r; “. . . il fine della pittura Christiana non è solo di dilettare, ma di giovare insieme.”
these matters of faith and religion if they were written in a book. Lucid scenes and corporeal figures, in essence, a style that reflected the visible, known natural world, formed the universal language necessary for the comprehensibility of sacred images. Thus images that depict the virtuous - especially Christ, the Virgin, saints, and martyrs - needed to be truthful, natural, and tangible, in order to serve effectively as models for the viewer. The artist must paint images that, if placed before the eyes of the viewer, would serve like mirrors of that virtue, thus moving the viewer by example.\textsuperscript{72} Paintings had the ability to present simply, in a minimal amount of space, profound and serious concepts and mysteries, and figures that impress themselves on the minds of the faithful. Images, in fact, were equated to the truthful reflections in mirrors, in glasses, and the surfaces of water.\textsuperscript{73} Naturalism lifted the veil of \textit{maniera} complexity, obscurity and incomprehensibility that had long shrouded Catholic truth and impeded the general populace from achieving the path to divine enlightenment and union with God.

The third and final function of painting was to move the spirit of the viewer, which Paleotti deigned the most noble and efficacious. Sacred painting must not merely delight, instruct and illuminate the intellect, but it must at the same time excite devotion and pierce the heart of viewers.\textsuperscript{74} Viewers cannot be moved to devotion without first

\textsuperscript{72} Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}, Libro 2, Capitolo 44, “Alcuni avvertimenti per rappresentare le imagini delle virtù e vitii,” 248v.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 12, “Delle cause perche s’introducessero le imagini profane,” 41v.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 33, “Delle pitture oscure, & difficili da intendersi,” 210r; and Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 25, “Che le imagini christiane servono molto a movere gli affetti delle persone,” 76v: “Il sentire narrare il martirio d’un santo, il zelo, & costanza
being delighted by their mortal eyes, and understanding what they see. Naturalism involved painting “from nature” (*dal naturale*), with vivacity (*vivacità*), and lively color (*vivi colori*). Paleotti proclaimed that “lively colors” seen in the martyrdom of saints or the Passion of Christ, for instance, greatly increased the devotion within the viewer, once again even more so than merely listening to or reading these sacred stories. According to Paleotti, whoever did not agree with this observation must be made of wood or marble. This statement does not merely reprise the traditional *paragone* between painting and sculpture, but also underscores the importance Paleotti attaches to “tangibility,” of living and breathing figures and scenes. Painting served as living Scripture for the Christian populace. The sacred stories heard or read lack the intimacy and connection forged between a painting and the viewer. Words fall dead on the lips of orators and from pages of books when they cannot be understood, lacking meaning for the uneducated. They are like inert matter, similar to wood or stone sculptures, which lack the *color* of life and nature. Naturalism and tangibility afforded to sacred paintings a means to connect emotionally with the viewer. It was only through this affective experience that a viewer could scale the ladder to divine things.

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*d’una vergine; la passione dello stesso Christo, sono cose che toccano dentro di vero: ma l’esserci con vivi colori quà posto sotto gli occhi il santo martirizzato, colà vergine combattuta, & nell’altro lato Christo inchiodato; egli è pur vero che tanto accresce la divotione, & compunge le viscere . . .”*

75 Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 1, Capitolo 25, “Che le imagini christiane servono molto a movere gli affetti delle persone,” 76v.

76 Ibid.
A naturalistic style effectively functioned to delight, instruct, and move the viewer in all forms of painting, but forging a means for the common man to reach divine enlightenment was the ultimate goal of sacred painting and of Paleotti’s discourse on naturalism. This fact cannot be underestimated, for it not only reinforced the value of images set forth by the Council of Trent, but established that the goal of sacred painting was equivalent to that of contemporary popular exercises of religious meditation which will be discussed in Chapter Four. A sacred painting style based on the imitation of nature was like an open, clear, and comprehensible book, available to the general populace.

In Book Two, Chapter Twelve, Paleotti emphasized the importance of knowledge, and particularly of science (nature), which allows the painter to build a ladder to divine things.\(^{77}\) Sacred painting provided appropriate models that enabled Christians to exercise virtuous acts in order to arrive in heaven.\(^{78}\) Paintings of sacred figures that are made tangible and life-like can effectively awaken the viewer to imitate the same pious path to heaven.\(^{79}\) In Book Two, Chapter Thirty-One, Paleotti eloquently stated that our lives begin with tears, and ends with the relief from pain.\(^{80}\) He described Christians as pilgrims in this life who must attend to the path and not go astray on this journey in order to arrive

\(^{77}\) Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 2, Capitolo 12, “Abusi delle pitture profane, & se elle christianamente debbono essere admesse,” 128v-129r.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 14, “Delle imagini de Imperatori gentili, ò tiranni, ò altri persecutori del nome Christiano,” 135r.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 23, “De i ritratti de’ Santi,” 166r.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 31, “Delle pitture ridicole,” 198r.
securely at the fatherland. According to Paleotti, “our foolishness usually does not allow that we can ascend to the contemplation of sublime things without the support of these inferior [things], therefore this art was commended as a means, and instrument to ascend very high.”

Not just any sacred painting, however, fits Paleotti’s standards. Artists must paint from nature (dal naturale), must at the very least demonstrate verisimilitude, paint with lively colors (vivi colori), and the figures must be tangible, making that which is absent present to the eyes of viewers. The imitation of the natural world was relevant for it placed strict parameters on the artist’s imagination to prevent him flaunting his invention in sacred imagery. Naturalism served as a plebian language for the idioti, and was immediately comprehensible as it replicated our own world. Moreover, God’s created things allowed the common man to scale the ladder to the divine and penetrate the eternal. It was in this capacity that Paleotti accepted certain types of profane art.

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81 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 2, Capitolo 31, “Delle pitture ridicole,” 198r.

82 Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 7, “Che l’arte del formare le imagini, christianamente essercitata, riesce nobilissima,” 30r-30v; Ibid., Libro I, Capitolo XXI, “Dell’ufficio & fine del pittore cristiano, a similitudine de gli oratori,” 67v.

83 Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 7, “Che l’arte del formare le imagini, christianamente essercitata, riesce nobilissima,” 30r-30v: “. . . la imbecillità nostra ordinariamente non comporta, che possiamo salire alla contemplatione delle cose sublimi senza l’appoggio di queste inferiori, però è commendata questa arte come mezo, & istrumento per ascendere più alto.”

84 Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le imagini cristiane,” 69r.
A similar position on the imitation of nature was applied to profane art. Gilio’s dogmatic opinion on refraining from “mixing” the profane with the sacred in painting was also shared by Paleotti, who further intransigently expressed that good Christians should not collect and exhibit profane art, even in private environments. Paleotti nevertheless recognized that some profane subjects had a functional use, even for pious purposes. The types of profane subjects that Paleotti deemed useful included primarily objects and subjects of nature, underscoring the fact that one finds numerous references to “the sun, the stars, the winds, the animals, the trees, the fishes, the flowers” in the Holy Scriptures. This specific concession for profane art is limited to subjects of nature and ties directly into Paleotti’s idea of nature as a manifestation of God’s divine creation, as well as his appreciation for science. According to Paleotti, it was improper for a Christian not to be learned in the sciences. Furthermore, Paleotti believed in the importance of public academies as “learning facilities,” voicing his condemnation for those who sought

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85 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 2, Capitolo 14, “Delle imagini de Imperatori gentili, ò tiranni, ò altri persecutori del nome Christiano,” 133v-135v. Paleotti does concede somewhat on collecting profane art by restricting its visibility by conserving them in private rooms or locations distant to the eyes of others.

86 Ibid., Libro 2, Capitolo 12, “Abusi delle pitture profane, & se elle christianamente debbono essere admesse,” 130r: “. . . le pitture profane, potendo apportare a noi vari giovamenti, non devono essere subito ributtate, ma misurate bene con sano giudicio, acciòché, a guisa de api che da varii fiori colgono il mele, sappiamo valerci di queste pitture ad uso di pietà, essendo che la grazia non distrugge, ma fa perfetta la natura, e la natura non aborrisce la grazia, ma la riceve.”

87 Ibid., 128v: “. . . del sole, delle stelle, dei venti, d’animali, d’arbori, de’pesci, di margarite . . . .”

88 Ibid.
to destroy these institutions in the past, and even in the present day. Knowledge of the sciences, according to Paleotti, also allows one to climb, like a ladder, to divine things.\textsuperscript{89} It is this conviction which places nature, God’s divine creation, among the subjects of profane painting which may serve as not only an instructional or documentary function, but also, and more importantly, as a devotional vehicle. In this capacity, as in sacred painting, profane painting too was required to abide by the precept of persuasion, by representing “natural things” drawn and colored “to life.”\textsuperscript{90} Paleotti’s appreciation for paintings portraying subjects from nature and his understanding of their devotional function, in fact, anticipates the even more enthusiastic sentiments and writings of Federico Borromeo, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Paleotti’s theoretical construction made it evident that everyone had the means to achieve union with God. In many ways, Paleotti’s \textit{Discorso} served as a guide to the painter on how to execute effectively a sacred work that functioned as a vehicle to the divine. It is for this very reason that the Latin passages in the chapters on errors and abuses (primarily in Book Two) are minimal, and abound with stylistic and iconographical examples. Moreover, we find in the 1582 \textit{Discorso} the Table of Contents for the planned but never-to-be-published next three books, that Paleotti intended to expound upon the prescriptions on how to paint specific sacred figures and particular biblical stories in Book Four. It is true that in the first two books of his \textit{Discorso} Paleotti

\textsuperscript{89} Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}, Libro 2, Capitolo 12, “Abusi delle pitture profane, & se elle christianamente debbono essere admesse,” 128v-129r.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., Libro 1, Capitolo 12, “Delle cause perche s’introducessero le imagini profane,” 41r.
did not touch much upon specific elements of artistic style. This fact, however, should not serve as the basis for discounting the value of Paleotti’s theoretical vision for sacred art. The published chapters establish that a naturalistic style was the antithesis of the problematic rarified style of *maniera*. Directing the artist to paint “from nature” (*dal naturale*) limited the artist’s imagination, invention, and fancy, and placed restrictions on how they used and demonstrated their skill and talent. Simultaneously, and most significantly, sacred images painted naturally, tangibly, and affectively had the capacity to delight, instruct, and move the viewers’ emotions, and as a communal language, they ultimately served as a ladder upon which the common man – the ignorant, the unlettered, the poor – could climb to reach heaven’s realm and achieve union with God. Whereas Paleotti’s *Discorso* may have been dedicated to the people of Bologna, its realm of authority and influence would extend far beyond his own diocese and the Cinquecento.
CHAPTER 3
NATURA AND SFUMATO: LEONARDO’S LEGACY AND THE CULTURE OF “TANGIBLE PRESENCE” IN LOMBARDY

The emphases that Paleotti placed on naturalism and the properties of color, light and shadow in affecting tangible presences in sacred imagery was intricately tied with the Lombard vision and conception of naturalism. Certainly, there were multiple variants of naturalism in practice throughout the Italian peninsula, Bologna significantly being one of them. In fact, the opening of the Carracci’s Accademia degli Desiderosi (later, Accademia dei Incamminati), a school intended to teach artists to “paint from life,” was roughly contemporaneous with the publication of Paleotti’s Discorso, opening sometime between late 1583 and early 1584. As discussed in Chapter Two, even the concept of the “imitation of nature” had multivalent definitions and interpretations, and was dependent upon chronological, cultural, regional, and personal considerations. So too with “naturalism,” which in the context of style, evolved in diverse directions and to varying degrees. The Carraccis’ naturalism had earlier been described as eclectic, an observation now supplanted with a more subtle view of the assimilation of Emilian and Venetian canons.¹ The Carracci style, in principal, was a brand of naturalism that still fell within the realms of Renaissance tradition: a melding of naturalism and classicism. Paleotti’s “naturalism” was of a different breed from that of the Bolognese, even the Carracci. The Cardinal’s aversion for classical art in general, and his insistence that sacred paintings imitate nature (artists must paint dal naturale), move viewers’ emotions, make something absent appear present before the eyes of viewers, and most importantly to connect

physically, mentally, and psychologically with the common man, corresponded to the kind of naturalism conceived in Lombardy. It is the brand of Lombard naturalism that was most aligned with Paleotti’s ideology on sacred painting, and that many art theorists of the Cinquecento, Seicento and beyond, recognized as a kind of naturalism distinct from the classicizing naturalism of the Renaissance and the Carracci, and the “idealized naturalism” of the maniera. As this chapter will show, Paleotti’s theology of nature embraced most directly the “inerudite Lombard simplicity” described by Carlo Cesare Malvasia in his Felsina pittrice. A close study of late Cinquecento and Seicento literature, moreover, will show that the distinguishing qualities and effects of Lombard naturalism would result in the categorization of artists from different natal origins (Parma, Bologna, and Venice to name a few) under the Lombard banner.

Milanese Art Theory: Leonardo and Lomazzo

The most important exemplar of Lombard thought and style was Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), who figured prominently in Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo’s Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scultura et architettura. Lomazzo (1538-1600), Milanese by birth, was an important source for Lombard theories on art. In fact, Lomazzo’s theories were primarily derived from Leonardo, whose style and theoretical positions were still

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fully entrenched within the artistic sphere of Lombardy even seventy years after his death. Published in 1584, the year of Archbishop of Milan Carlo Borromeo’s death, Lomazzo’s advocacy for naturalism in painting was also inflected with a strong Counter-Reformatory tone, a legacy of Borromeo’s latent spiritual and intellectual realm of influence in Milan.

Lomazzo’s definition of painting, in fact, encapsulated the Lombard adherence to naturalism and Counter-Reformatory ideals. For Lomazzo, painting was an art in which proportionate lines, natural colors and light, imitate corporeal things, not only in the relief of bodies, but also movement, which visibly demonstrates to our eyes “great affections and passions of the soul.”

This convergence of Counter-Reformatory thought and Lombard, or Leonardesque, theory is further explored in Lomazzo’s chapter on “Motions in Painting.” Lomazzo related Leonardo’s ideas on empirical observation in representing physical motion, to the Counter-Reformatory emphasis of spiritual incitement or “moving” of the viewer’s soul. Lomazzo’s integration of physical and spiritual movement should be considered as a descendent of Leonardo’s (and Leon Battista Alberti’s) principle that demanded that the actions of the body should express the “passion of its mind.”

In the Trattato, however, this merging of meanings was more intricately tied to the Tridentine decree on art and Counter-Reformation thought, where the emotional

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incitement of the viewer was equated to a spiritual transformation. According to
Lomazzo, motions in painting should be similar to those observed in life. By neglecting
this observation, the painter commits a discord in nature, similar to playing untuned
strings on an instrument. The prestigious status given to empiricism in Lomazzo’s
Trattato in capturing the emotions of figures, and its effect on eliciting reciprocal
emotions in the viewer, was closely tied to the Catholic doctrine of excitatio, as well as to
Paleotti’s emphases on nature and verisimilitude as means of exciting devotion and
piercing the hearts of viewers. According to Lomazzo, the means by which painters
effectively captured the motions and emotions of their subjects was primarily through
color and light, which made the figures appear natural rather than artificial. Lomazzo
singles out Leonardo and Correggio, among other painters, as exemplars in this quality.

Lomazzo revisited the subject of painting in his 1591 Idea del Tempio della
Pittura. In his Idea, Lomazzo identified seven painters, Michelangelo, Gaudenzio
Ferrari, Polidoro da Caravaggio, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael Santi, Andrea Mantegna,
and Titian, whose styles represented the foundation of painting, the “pillars” of his
imaginary tempio. Lomazzo’s selection of artists is particularly interesting, as five of
them (Gaudenzio, Polidoro, Leonardo, Mantegna, and Titian) were either North Italian by

6 Lomazzo, Trattato, vol. 1, Libro 2, Capitolo 1, “Della forza, ed efficacia dei
moti,” 176-77.

7 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 2, 210r.

8 Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, Idea del Tempio della Pittura (Milan: Paolo Gorrardo
Ponto, 1591).

9 Ibid., 39-60.
birth, and/or worked extensively in North Italy. Furthermore, all five artists had been, and would continue to be, associated with “Lombard style” or designated as “Lombard artists” in the Cinquecento and Seicento, from Vasari to Bellori. It is only after the comprehensive examination and analyses of this literature that the qualities of Lombard style and its relationship with Paleotti’s Discorso become clear.

Defining Lombard Naturalism

Today we recognize that the categorization of artistic style in terms of regional affiliation is not particularly straightforward. Artists working in a specific region, while utilizing techniques and effects that were inherent in the region of their birth or residence, also often assimilated styles and ideas from other parts of Italy, and beyond. Apprenticeship, training, travel, and even personal proclivities, in varying degrees, contributed to an artist’s style, sometimes even precluding regional affiliation. The imprecision of regional stylistic delineations and our inherent need for refined, neat categories has led to the utilization of regional designations primarily as geographical markers, rather than overarching categories for artistic style. For instance, we may speak of a Lombard trend or influence in the work of the Parmese artist Correggio, but we would not subsume his oeuvre under the category of the Lombard School, nor would we identify him as a Lombard. The 2004 exhibition, Painters of Reality, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, brought new insights, as well as new questions, about regional categories in the latter half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In her introductory essay in the Painters of Reality exhibition catalogue, Andrea Bayer
pointed to the fact that modern parameters for regional categories are quite different from those utilized during the Renaissance. Lombardy (the focus of the exhibition), geographically, according to Bayer “would have been considered a more elastic term.”

Bologna, Venice, and the Venetian territories of Brescia and Bergamo were often grouped under Lombardy. Even Parma, which was a duchy of Milan up to 1543, continued to be considered a part of Lombardy. It seems, however, that the Lombard designation was indeed utilized in the context of style during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and like geographical parameters, its usage was quite different from the modern application of regional styles. It was, in fact, the Lombard preference for representing “tangible presence” that provided the antidote to maniera style in the Post-Tridentine era, and which is intricately linked to the naturalism advocated in Counter-Reformatory treatises on sacred painting, two of which were written by important prelates with close ties to Lombardy: Cardinals Gabriele Paleotti and Federico Borromeo (1564-1631).

In his 1568 edition of the Vite, Giorgio Vasari included painters born in Ferrara, Cremona, Brescia, Novara, and Milan in a chapter entitled “The Ferrarese Artists Benvenuto Garofalo and Girolamo Carpi and Other Lombards.” Nearly half a century later, Giovanni Battista Agucchi (1570-1632), secretary to Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini,  


11 Ibid.

identified four primary schools of painting in his *Trattato della Pittura* (1607-1615): Roman, Tuscan, Venetian, and Lombard.\(^{13}\) For the Lombard School, Agucchi named the Parmese artist, Antonio da Correggio, “the first of the Lombards” (*il primo de’ Lombardi*).\(^{14}\) Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), according to the account of Chantelou, had a more expansive definition, considering Correggio, Titian, and Veronese among the Lombards.\(^{15}\) The appellation of these artists as “Lombard” is significant, as the diversity of the natal origins of these North Italian artists seems to suggest that the Lombard quantifier was not geography, but a shared stylistic component. The modern tendency is to think in terms of absolutes. By this reasoning, the classically inspired style, theory and practice of the Carracci automatically severs any direct correlation with an artist like Caravaggio. The words and opinions of late-sixteenth and seventeenth century writers, however, indicate that the methodology for discerning style was quite different during the late Renaissance. Frequently, common *intentions* and the artistic *means* through which they were achieved overrode easy regional identification on the basis of birthplace or nuances in style. It is necessary, therefore, to identify and clarify the stylistic characteristics used to qualify this divergent group of North Italian artists as “Lombard” by examining the textual sources of the period alongside careful analyses of works of art.


\(^{15}\) Cited in Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 113.
In 1568, Vasari republished his *Vite*, correcting the errors and oversights that appeared in the 1550 edition and expanding the geographical parameters of his biographical profiles. The expansion of the *Vite* was certainly made in response to the criticism for his Tuscan-Roman partiality, which was made evident through his focus on primarily Central-Italian artists in his 1550 edition. The 1568 edition, however, while including more artists from Northern Italy, still bespoke Vasari’s own taste and estimation, as these new biographies were rather short. Mere brevity, however, does not explain why Vasari gathered the biographies of artists from Ferrara, Cremona, Brescia, Novara, and Milan in a chapter on Lombard artists. Complicating the issue further, Vasari also identified artists from Mantua and Bologna as Lombard, citing Mantegna, Costa, Boccacino from Cremona, and Francia from Bologna as Lombard predecessors to these artists. Vasari’s remarks on the various painters discussed in this chapter of Lombard artists, however, clearly pointed to a shared stylistic quality: tangible, life-like naturalism.

According to Vasari, the *Resurrection of Lazarus* (San Francesco, Ferrara) by Ferrarese artist Benvenuto Garofalo (1481-1559), the first artist of the chapter, was “beautifully colored” (*colorita vagamente*), and painted “with ready and lively attitudes” (*con attitudini pronte e vivaci*). The figures in Garofalo’s *Massacre of the Innocents*, in

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18 Ibid., 463.
the same church of San Francesco, Ferrara, was also described as having the same quality of “liveliness.” Overall, Vasari admired Garofalo for his depiction of bold movements, and for the diverse emotions portrayed in his figures (Fig. 2). The naturalness or liveliness of his painting was credited to the fact that Garofalo carefully studied the qualities of light and shadow by making models.\(^1\) Vasari’s most important statement, however, was the observation that Garofalo portrayed from life and painted every detail “naturally” through the direct imitation and observation of nature.\(^2\) The works of Ferrarese artist and disciple of Garofalo, Girolamo da Carpi (1501-56), were described in a similar fashion. Vasari described Da Carpi’s work for the Carmelite church of San Paolo in Bologna as demonstrating “beautiful liveliness, movement, grace and good relief.”\(^3\)

Vasari next moved to Cremonese artists, beginning with the work of the Campi: father, Galeazzo, and sons Giulio (1502-72), Antonio (1523-87) and Vincenzo (1536-91). The Campi were treated rather summarily by Vasari, acknowledging primarily Antonio Campi’s altarpiece (he does not mention the subject) for the church of San Sigismondo, outside of Cremona, which he described as a very beautiful work owing to the number and diversity of the figures.\(^4\) Antonio Campi was also the author of a history entitled,

\(^{19}\) Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 6, ed. Milanesi, 464.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 475: “. . . bella vivezza, movenza, grazia e buon rilievo.”

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 496.
Cremona fedelissima città (1585), which provided a few significant remarks on the work of his brother Giulio. Giulio was credited for having brought perfection to the art of painting through his “goodness of design, [and] as for his beautiful coloring.” In his brief account on other painters in Cremona, Antonio described many of them as having a rare skill in painting from nature, and in the expression of “liveliness” (vivacità) (Fig. 3), which accorded with Vasari’s assessment of the painters Garofalo and Da Carpi. The last Cremonese artist described by Vasari was Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1530-1625). In Sofonisba’s portraits, Vasari once again highlighted the quality of naturalism in the life-like quality of the artist’s portraits. The portrait of Sofonisba’s Sisters Playing Chess (Fig. 4, Muzeum Narodowe, Poznan) was described as appearing alive, lacking only speech. The family portrait of her father, Amilcare, her sister Minerva, and her brother Asdrubale was likewise commended for being “so alive.” The portraits executed by Sofonisba’s sisters, Lucia and Europa, were also briefly noted for their liveliness and naturalness.

The Brescian artists, Girolamo Romanino (ca. 1484 – ca. 1559) (Fig. 5) and Moretto da Brescia (ca. 1498-1554) (Fig. 6), were praised by Vasari for their ability to


24 Ibid., 197: “. . . bontà del disegno, come per la vaghezza del colorire.”


26 Ibid., 498-99.

27 Ibid., 500-01.
“imitate natural things” and for being “so alive.” 28 Girolamo Savoldo (1480-1548) (Fig. 7) was admired for his skill in depicting night scenes, and Girolamo Muziano (1532-92) for his beautiful figures and landscapes. In his 1642 Vite, Giovanni Baglione (ca. 1566-1643), whose own style embraced Lombard qualities, similarly admired Muziano’s genius in painting landscapes, mentioning that all the Roman artists referred to him as “the young landscapist.” 29 Baglione, in addition, admired Muziano for his portraits painted “from nature” (dal naturale) and his capacity to depict the emotions of his figures. 30

Vasari concluded his chapter on Lombard artists with the Milanese artists Bramantino (ca. 1460-1536), Gaudenzio Ferrari (1475-1546), and Bernardino Luini (1480-1532), but discussed them very briefly and in very general terms. The written works of Lomazzo and Cardinal Federico Borromeo, both from Milan, however, provide further insight into the style of two of these artists. Lomazzo had commented on the artist Gaudenzio Ferrari in his 1584 Trattato dell’arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura. Lomazzo highly esteemed Gaudenzio’s talent for expressing the emotions of his figures, particularly in images of Christ’s Passion (Fig. 8). 31 The paintings of the Milanese artist,

28 Vasari, Vite, ed. Milanesi, vol. 6, 507-08; Vasari indicated that Romanino’s works were “molto bella, e vi si veggiono forte imitate le cose naturali,” and admired Moretto’s heads in the Conversion of Saul which he described as “molto naturali” and “vivissime.”


30 Ibid., 51.
Bernardino Luini, were very favorably discussed in Cardinal Federico Borromeo’s 1625 *Musaeum*, a book intended as a type of abbreviated catalogue of the principal works in his recently founded Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan.\(^{32}\) Among the qualities Borromeo admired in Luini’s style, was his exquisite design and delicacy, but most importantly, the “movements and air of the affectionate and pious faces,” and the softness of Luini’s figures (Fig. 9).\(^{33}\) Borromeo described these features as specifically Leonardesque, qualities that endowed a “life-like” or “natural” appearance to his figures, and not dissimilar to the characteristics already attributed to the style of other Lombards discussed by Vasari.

According to Andrea Bayer, naturalism was the distinctive quality of the Lombard tradition of painting, and this observation is indeed supported by Vasari’s description of Lombard artists.\(^{34}\) Naturalism is the key thread that links these various artists from Northern Italy: from Garofalo and Da Carpi’s *vivacità* in their portrayal of movements and emotions, to Sofonisba’s life-like portraits and Romanino, Moretto, Savoldo and Muziano’s ability to imitate nature (whether they be figures, night scenes, or landscapes). Naturalism, however, is still a rather broad term. Lifelikeness and vivacity are adjectives

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\(^{32}\) Federico Borromeo, *Musaeum* (1625), riprodotto dall’edizione originale con traduzione e note riccendo il terzo centenario della Biblioteca Ambrosiana (Milan: Tipografia Umberto Allegretti, 1909). The Pinacoteca Ambrosiana was founded by Borromeo in April 1618, the date of the Cardinal’s *Atto di donazione*. Borromeo’s *Musaeum* will be discussed in Chapter 7.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 61: “. . . il Luino vi aggiunse quanto di meglio potevo dare, cioè una certa delicatezza, le movenze e l’aria dei volti affettuosa e devota.”

\(^{34}\) Bayer, “Defining Naturalism,” 5.
that describe a certain quality, but it does not specifically signify a style. Vasari further clarified the naturalism of the Lombard style in his *Vite* of Correggio (ca. 1490-1534), who, unlike the artists discussed above, was treated separately in his own biography. In describing Correggio’s frescoes in the cupola of Parma Cathedral (Fig. 10), Vasari specifically noted the strong “relief” (*rilievo*), and the “softness of the flesh” (*morbidezza delle carni*) of his figures.\(^{35}\) It is significant that in his chapter on Lombard artists in the 1568 edition, Vasari noted that Girolamo da Carpi studied and imitated the style of Correggio, whose color was “very natural” (*più naturale*).\(^{36}\) It is indeed Correggio’s use of color, light, and shadow that endows his figures with tangible presence. From the remarks by Vasari and Lomazzo, it seems that the Lombard style consisted of a particular kind of naturalism, one arrived at through the effects of color, light, and shadow, which imbue the figures and scenes with a tangible quality; effects and qualities that would be later prescribed by Paleotti as “necessary” for efficacious sacred images. This position would resonate even in the Seicento in the works of subsequent authors, including Baglione and Borromeo.

Agucchi, in his 1607-15 *Trattato*, gave Correggio the further distinction of being a great imitator of nature and the leader of the Lombard School.\(^{37}\) Correggio’s style, however, owed no small debt to his predecessors, and in particular Leonardo da Vinci.

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\(^{35}\) Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 4, ed. Bettarini and Barocchi, 49.

\(^{36}\) Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 6, ed. Milanesi, 471.

Expanding on the astute observations (1928-29) of Roberto Longhi, and the 2000 exhibition *Il Cinquecento Lombardo* in Milan, the *Painters of Reality* exhibition demonstrated that the Lombard interest in nature is traceable to Leonardo’s Milanese years (from 1481/83 to 1499, and again from 1508 to 1513). His extensive interest in empiricism, the study and observation of nature, is well documented in his numerous preserved manuscript drawings and writings. Leonardo’s inquisitive mind certainly explains his fascination in the study of nature, but it is an interest that can also be linked to his desire to raise painting to the Liberal Arts, in short, a science. There is, however, another aspect, not necessarily unassociated with the former, in which nature is seen as the divine work of God, and thus by extension the artist.

If you scorn painting, which is the sole imitator of all the manifest works of nature, you will certainly be scorning a subtle invention which with philosophical and subtle speculation considers all manner of forms: sea, land, trees, animals, grasses, flowers, all of which are enveloped in light and shade. Truly this is science, the legitimate daughter of nature, because painting is born of that nature; but to be more correct, we should say the granddaughter of nature, because all visible things have been brought forth by nature and it is among these that painting is born. Therefore we may justly speak of it as the granddaughter of nature and as the kin of God.

The careful observation of the wonders of nature can be seen in Leonardo’s first commission in Milan, the *Virgin of the Rocks* (Fig. 11, Musée du Louvre, Paris), where

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40 Bayer, ed., *Painters of Reality*.

nature, the divine product of God’s creation, surrounds the holy personages assembled in the center. The Virgin, Christ Child, St. John the Baptist and the angel are encapsulated in a verdant womb of lush trees, plants, flowers, and rock grotto. Leonardo’s studies and interest may have in fact sparked the burgeoning production of genre painting, and the increasing appearance of predominant still-lifes and landscapes in sixteenth-century painting.

Similarly, the *Fruitseller* (Fig. 12, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan), painted by the Cremonese artist Vincenzo Campi, is one of the earliest genre paintings in Italy where the fruits of nature take center stage. Paintings by Bartolomeo Passarotti (1529-92), such as the *Butcher’s Shop* (Fig. 13, Galleria d’Arte Antica, Rome) and the *Fishmonger* (Fig. 14, Galleria d’Arte Antica, Rome), both contemporary to Campi’s *Fruitseller*, similarly feature everyday people with products reaped from the earth and sea. The paintings of the Milanese artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo (ca. 1530-1593) (Fig. 15) equally feature various fruits, vegetables, and flowers, but assembled into fantastical portraits, rather than placed on display.

It is not merely the vibrant presence of nature itself, however, that defines the naturalism of Leonardo’s works, but the rendering of tangible figures, through the capturing of the *affetti*, and a carnal quality, a *morbidezza*, in the flesh. In his description of Leonardo’s *Last Supper* (Fig. 16, refectory, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan), Vasari commented on the masterful rendering of the Apostles’ *affetti*: their love, fear, disdain,
and pain. In 1584, Lomazzo similarly singled out the exquisite “movements of the passions of the souls” (moti delle passioni degli animi) expressed in the faces and bodies of the figures in Leonardo’s Last Supper. Nearly half a century later, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, praised Leonardo’s mural for the very same qualities in his 1625 Musaeum. Vasari also admired the carnal quality of Leonardo’s figures. According to Vasari, Leonardo succeeded in demonstrating the extent to which art can imitate nature in his Mona Lisa (Fig. 17, Musée du Louvre, Paris): “seemed, in truth, to be not colors, but flesh.” For Leonardo, shadows were integral to the impression of perspective, particularly atmospheric, and to the rendering of three-dimensional form. Shadows may vary in degree of darkness from the most subtle to the darkest shadow (ombre oscure sfumate), but they were closely aligned to properties of light and color, and thus essential to the imitation of nature and natural forms. This rendering of the affetti and the morbidezza of the flesh is visible in Leonardo’s Virgin of the Rocks (Fig. 11). The Virgin’s face displays a quiet nobility and pensiveness at the same time, reflecting her foreknowledge of her son’s fate. Leonardo’s delicate handling of light and shadow in the rendering the figures, visible particularly in the infant Christ and St. John the Baptist,

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45 Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 2, ed. Torrentino, 552: “. . . che non colori ma carne pareva veramente.”
endow the figures with a tangible quality. In Correggio’s *Noli me Tangere* (Fig. 18, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid), the surprise and inner turmoil of the Magdalene is clearly expressed through her face and gestures, and the Leonardesque handling of the light and shadows of the figures give them the *morbidezza* so admired by Vasari. The attention to landscape details can also be discerned in this work, further supporting Correggio’s knowledge and affinity to Leonardo’s own style and interests.

Leonardo’s portraits of *Cecilia Gallerani* (Fig. 19, Czartoryski Museum, Cracow) and *La Belle Ferroniere* (Fig. 20, Musée du Louvre, Paris) further express the artist’s interest in representing the *affetti*, and vivacità of his sitters. The *sfumato* utilized in the background vista in the *Mona Lisa* is accentuated here in these two portraits by the deeper *sfumato*, or tenebrism (foreshadowing Caravaggio) in the backgrounds, undoubtedly influenced by Flemish precedents. The sitters are represented in three-quarter length, set before an almost black background, with a single, unseen light source falling from the upper right. The contrast of deep shadow and light enhanced the presence of the sitters by pushing them forward toward the viewer, breaking the Albertian window. One could argue that the Albertian window provided a rational extension of the viewers’ space, giving the viewer the impression that they could walk into the picture. This may indeed be true, however, the “window” also simultaneously served as a boundary, spatially and psychologically distancing the viewer from the painted figures and scenes.\(^4^6\) Leonardo’s impenetrable dark background eliminated this distance, focusing rather on

tangible presence; the viewer is not intended to be present in the painting, but his presence is made implicit by the immediacy and tangibility of the sacred scenes and figures. The darkness not only pushed the figure closer to pictorial plane, but also augmented the *rilievo* of the figures. The manner in which Leonardo used light and shadow is precisely one of the distinctive elements that contribute to his figures’ presence or *rilievo*. According to Vasari:

> It is an extraordinary thing how that genius, in his desire to give the highest relief to the works that he made, went so far with dark shadows, in order to find the darkest possible grounds, that he sought for blacks which might make deeper shadows and be darker than other blacks, that by their means he might make his lights the brighter, and in the end this method turned out so dark, that, no light remaining there, his pictures had rather the character of things made to represent an effect of night, than the clear quality of daylight; which all came from seeking to give greater relief, and to achieve the final perfection of art.  

It was Leonardo’s discernment of the intrinsic relationship between the properties of shadow, light, and color that facilitated the creation of life-like presences. The naturalness and *oscurità* of Leonardo’s style had a wide dissemination, not only in Milan, but in many North Italian cities. In his various portraits (Fig. 21) and representations of Mary Magdalene, the Brescian artist Savoldo appropriated Leonardo’s half-length portrait format. The effects of light and shadow which endow his figures with a volumetric quality were combined with engaging poses and portrayal of their *affetti*,

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47 Vasari, *Lives*, vol. 1, ed. De Vere, 630; Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 4, ed. Bettarini and Barocchi, 23-24: “È cosa mirabile che quello ingegno, che avendo desiderio di dare sommo rilievo alle cose che egli faceva, andava tanto con l’ombre scure e trovare i fondi de’ più scuri, che cercava neri che ombrassino e fussino più scuri degli’ altri neri, per fare che ‘l chiaro, mediante quegli, fussi più lucido; et infine riusciva questo modo tanto tinto che, non vi rimanendo chiaro, avevono più forma di cose fatter per contrafare una notte che una finezza del lume del dì: ma tutto era per cercare di dare maggiore rilievo, di trovar il fine e la perfezione de l’arte.”
further convincing viewers of tangible presences. Savoldo, in fact, was praised by Paolo Pino (1534-65) in his 1583 *Dialogo di Pittura* for his strength in the imitation of nature, combining verità (verity) and deep chiaroscuro (light and shade).\(^48\) According to Mary Pardo, “Savoldo’s period of Veneto-Lombard apprenticeship (between the mid1490s and ca. 1505) overlapped Leonardo’s Milanese sojourn”, which may suggest a personal encounter with or knowledge of Leonardo’s work.\(^49\) It was precisely during this period that Leonardo produced his half-length *Angel of the Annunciation*, which is now lost. The later 1513-16 *St. John the Baptist* (Fig. 22, Musée du Louvre, Paris) is a close variant of this lost painting. Both works consisted of a half-length figure whose pose and expressions directly engage the viewer, coupled with *ombre oscure sfumate*. Similar portraits that incorporate an engaging tangible presence with plain, dark backgrounds can be found in the works of Moretto da Brescia (Fig. 23), Girolamo Romanino (Fig. 24), and Giulio Campi (Fig. 25). The Milanese artist, Bernardino Luini, an acknowledged follower of Leonardo, utilized the same effects in his 1527-31 *St. Catherine* (Fig. 9, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg).\(^50\) The half-length figure of St. Catherine is flanked by two putti whose bodies emerge from the tenebristic background. The *sfumatesque* handling of the figures gives them volumetric form, a tangibility further emphasized by the dark,


\(^{50}\) Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 61; “... il Luino riconosceva l’eccellenza di Leonardo nel disegno e Leonardo alla sua volta avrebbe attribuito al suo discepolo tutta la Gloria del quadro, se avesse veduto quanto più bella ha resa l’opera sua.”
austere blackness of the background. This oscurità pushes the figure of St. Catherine toward the forward plane, while simultaneously accentuating the rich crimson of her robe.

Similar manifestations of the leonardesque style can also be found in Venice. Vasari had indicated that Giorgione (1477-1510) had seen several works by Leonardo, and was therefore deeply influenced by his treatment of sfumato:

Giorgione had seen some things by the hand of Leonardo with a beautiful gradation of colors, and with extraordinary relief, effected, as has been related, by means of dark shadows; and this manner pleased him so much that he was forever studying it as long as he lived, and in oil-painting he imitated it greatly.\(^5\)

Vasari further commented that it was through Giorgione’s unione sfumata ne’colori that his portraits (Fig. 26) appear to be in relief, rather than painted. The sfumato, or to use Vasari’s words, “dark shadows,” of Giorgione’s works appears to be a technique and aesthetic preference most closely associated with Lombard artists, via Leonardo. In fact, according to Dolce’s interlocutor in his 1557 L’Aretino, Pietro Aretino:

And after him (Leonardo da Vinci) came Giorgione of Castelfranco, a painter who made a great mark, but promised even more. One sees certain works by him in oils which are extremely lively and have such a degree of sfumato that shadows are not discernible.\(^5\)


Vasari’s and Dolce’s words, however, should not discount the fact that the Venetians had their own tradition and interest in nature, particularly in atmospheric effects, but this shared interest in naturalism, and especially the utilization of varying degrees of Leonardesque sfumato, often legitimized their placement under the Lombard category. This Lombard darkness clarifies Federico Zuccari’s (ca. 1542-1609) rather cryptic comment upon seeing Caravaggio’s Calling of St. Matthew in the Contarelli Chapel (San Luigi in dei Francesi, Rome), recounted in Baglione’s 1642 Le vite de’pittori, scultori, et architetti: “What is all the fuss about? I do not see anything here other than the style of Giorgione in the picture of the Saint when Christ calls him to the Apostolate.”53 A decade later, in his 1652 Trattato della pittura, e scultura, uso, et abuso loro, the theologian, Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli (1584-1670), described the work of Giorgione as having been executed with masterful liveliness, exemplary of the beautiful manner of Lombardy.54 The oscurità prevalent in the works of Leonardo’s contemporaries and followers had, by the seventeenth-century, become an acknowledged key characteristic of Lombard style. One of the most powerful statements was recorded in Carlo Ridolfi’s (1594-1658) 1648 Vite of Tintoretto, in which he recounts Tintoretto’s impression of Lombard painters: “Returning from a certain city in Lombardy he was sought out by

53 Baglione, Vite, 137; English translation of Baglione’s Vite of Caravaggio is reprinted in Friedlaender, Caravaggio Studies, 235.

Palma for his opinion on the value of these painters? Jacopo answered that he did not know what to say if not, that they are found in darkness.”

Bernini’s (according to Chantelou) designation of Titian (1490-1576) as a Lombard, confirms the leonardesque stylistic thread that finds its source in Giorgione. The darkness that pervades, in particular, his mature works (Fig. 27) is a heritage that can be traced back to Leonardo’s theory of light, shadow, and color. Furthermore, the empirical naturalism of Titian’s works has been noted by seventeenth-century authors. Agucchi considered Titian the head of the Venetian School, characterizing him as one who imitated nature as it appeared in front of him. Yet, it was the very practice of imitating nature that Agucchi and others designated as a specifically “Lombard” quality, thus affirming the translation of the Leonardesque style to Venice. In Agucchi’s estimation, only Correggio supersedes Titian’s skill in imitating nature. Federico Borromeo, in his 1625 Musaeum, admired Titian particularly for his color and imitation of nature. Titian’s works, according to Borromeo, displayed a “wonderful imitation of nature.” Titian’s Deposition, one of several works by the artist owned by Borromeo, was described in the following manner in his 1625 Musaeum: “Here the perfection of art

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56 Enggass and Brown, Italian and Spanish Art, 28.

57 Ibid.

58 Borromeo, Musaeum, 47.
was in the manner which the chest of Christ with his dead flesh challenged nature itself.  

Agucchi’s and Borromeo’s estimation of Titian’s naturalism repeats the observations of Dolce in his *L’Aretino*, in which the interlocutor, Aretino, stated:

And Giorgione has himself been a thousand leagues outdistanced by Titian, who imparted a heroic majesty to his figures and devised a system of coloring so very soft, and so close to reality in its tones, that one can well and truly say that it goes in step with nature.

*Colorita morbidissima* and *tinte* are part of the stylistic heritage bequeathed by Leonardo to Northern Italy, which would later be considered a distinctly Lombard style, linking Correggio, Giorgione, Savoldo, and others, irrespective of their natal regional affiliations.

The widely disseminated Lombard practice of painting *dal naturale*, and the utilization of variants of leonardesque *sfumato* in the years during and following the Council of Trent is, I believe, extremely significant. The artificiality or “artfulness” of *maniera* in sacred painting was a primary target of criticism for Post-Trent theorists, particularly Gilio and Paleotti. The displaying of creativity, and its visual manifestation in complex poses, bright, unnatural color, and convoluted compositions began to be perceived around 1564 as artistic independence which translated into an exhibition or flaunting of an artist’s skill. Painting *dal naturale*, however, restricted the artist to empirical and scriptural truth, and limited flagrant creativity and artfulness. Shadows,

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59 Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 48: “Qui la perfezione dell’arte fa in modo che il petto di Cristo con la sua morta carne sfidi la natura stessa.”

60 Dolce, *L’Aretino*, 84-85: “. . . e Giorgio lasciato a dietro infinite miglia da Tiziano, il quale diede alle sue figure una eroica maestà e trovò una maniera di colorito morbidissima, e nelle tinte cotanto simile al vero, che si può ben dire con verita ch’ella va di pari con la natura.”
from delicate *sfumato* to deep tenebrism, served a three-fold purpose: artistic, theoretical, and theological. From an artistic standpoint, shadow was integral to empirical naturalism. Its interaction and effects with light and color were essential in creating three-dimensional forms, rendering the verity, tangibility of figures and scenes in a two-dimensional medium. In speaking of the talent of Leonardo da Vinci, Vasari proclaimed: “In the art of painting, he added to the manner of coloring in oils certain obscurity whereby the moderns have given great force and relief to their figures.” Giovanni Battista Armenini’s (1530-1609) 1586 *De’ veri precetti della pittura*, furthermore, pointed to the enlivening effect of varnishes (intrinsic to the oil medium and to the effects of color, light, and shadow), a practice he associated with Lombard artists. Thus the characteristics of naturalism – relief, verity of colors and tints, overall life-likeness, emotions, and tangibility – were not only qualities that were recognized as distinctly Lombard and intrinsic to the heritage bequeathed by Leonardo, but the means by which these effects were achieved, through the oil medium, were also credited to the Lombards.

Tangibility was necessary, particularly in sacred art, in order to ensure the spiritual and affective connection between a painting and its intended Catholic viewer. The sense of *presence* was the antidote to what Paleotti called *lontananza* – the distance between the past and the present - that could only be achieved through the depiction of a

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61 Vasari, *Vite*, vol. 1, ed. De Vere, 639-40

tangible and recognizable world that reflected the viewers’ own. This was an idea alien to the artists of the maniera who reveled in dissonant colors, complicated and rarified poses and compositions that portrayed an artificial, often fantastical realm, which in sacred art functioned to distance the viewer from any visual or temporal connection to the present. In maniera paintings figures are hard-edged and brightly lit. Light is conceived separate from form, and the presence of dark shadows is minimal or nonexistent. Shadows, however, were necessary to hide the artist’s manipulation. According to Leonardo, the painter should make certain “that his shadows and lights be united without strokes or marks, in the manner of smoke”. The removal of marks or signs of the artist’s hand guaranteed the viewer’s focus on the story or figures, rather than on the artist’s visual intercession. This practice would seem to undermine the artist’s role as creator, but on the contrary, aligned the artist with God, the divine Creator. Alexander Nagel recently proposed an insightful reading of the theoretical relevance of sfumato to an artist’s status:

Eliminating all evidence of the work and process of painting, sfumato likened painting to divine creation, which brought things forth from nothing. It also invoked the example of the unmediated manifestation of the divine in the legendary image of Christ “made without human hands.” Sfumato thus radically dissociated painting from the work of the painter and gave to painting the status of an autonomous creation. A new and


unfathomable gap between work and maker only gave a new mystery to
the artist’s activity as creator.”

Painting as a divine product, without the outward, visual evidence of the artist’s hand,
thus contributed to the artist’s affinity with the divine Creator, and elevated his status.
The range and degrees of shadow, therefore, decreased the flaunting of manual artistry
through visual brushstrokes or lines. The hiding of these visual marks combined with an
empirical imitation of nature would have resolved the problem of sacred subjects being
treated as art rather than truth in the minds of Post-Tridentine theorists, while at the same
time, served the artist’s purposes by surreptitiously endowing him with a divine status.
Moreover, the effects of shadow and light provided a sense of divine mystery, of
revealing and concealing, which bestowed on sacred paintings a “divineness” formerly
signaled by overt haloes and sumptuous, artificial color. It is significant, therefore, that
many of the artists active in the Post-Trent years, particularly during the reign of Pope
Clement VIII, were either Lombard, such as Muziano and Caravaggio, or artists such as
Ludovico Cigoli, Francesco Vanni, Cavaliere d’Arpino, and Annibale Carracci, who all
made trips to study the art of Lombardy. Moreover, Caravaggio’s successes in the realm
of both public and private religious images in the early Seicento simultaneously
persuaded many artists to copy and appropriate the rebellious artist’s tangible and veristic
style.

Lombard naturalism provided the antidote to Central-Italian maniera, required in
the Tridentine and Post-Tridentine years, and ultimately fulfilled Paleotti’s vision for
sacred art. It was Paleotti’s arrival in Rome in 1586 that facilitated the dissemination of

66 Nagel, “Leonardo and Sfumato,” 18
his ideas. The convergence of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation climate under Pope Clement VIII, Paleotti’s close associations with key ecclesiastical figures (particularly cardinal-patrons) and institutions, and the association between Paleotti’s “theology of nature” associated with meditative practices, provided multiple interdependent means for the promulgation of his ideas and the establishment of Lombard naturalism as the preferred model for sacred imagery.
CHAPTER 4
ADDRESSING THE POPOLO: THE ROMAN AMBIENT IN THE LAST TWO DECADES OF THE CINQUECENTO

Paleotti’s arrival in Rome in 1586 marked the beginning of a critical stage in the reformulation of sacred art. During this period, Rome witnessed a resurgence of building and renovations in preparation for the Jubilee of 1600. Immediately upon taking the papal throne, Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585-1590) began an ambitious urban and artistic program to transform the city to one worthy of the Church Triumphant. Sixtus’ principal achievements included: the reconstruction of the Acqua Alessandrina (renamed the Aqua Felice in honor of the Pope) which brought a new source of water into the city; the building of a new system of straight streets whose ends were marked by obelisks linking Rome’s major churches; and the rebuilding of the Scala Santa, Lateran Palace, and the expansion of the Vatican Library.¹ In 1592, Paleotti’s young former protégé in Bologna, Ippolito Aldobrandini was elevated to the papal throne as Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592-1605). Under the aegis of Pope Clement VIII, Paleotti’s “theology of nature” would find its ultimate expression. It was in Rome that Paleotti’s vision for sacred art successfully interconnected with a Counter-Reformation culture no longer sympathetic to maniera caprice and intellectualism and seeking a quotidian language – oral, literal and pictorial – in order to address and connect with the general Christian populace. Paleotti’s intimate connection with Pope Clement VIII, his close relationship with the Oratorians, Jesuits

and key cardinal-patrons, and his association with the newly founded Accademia di San Luca, would prove that his ideology of naturalism was not only relevant, but was, moreover, closely aligned with the aims of the Church, empirical science, and exercises on meditation.

From the beginning of his reign, Pope Clement VIII made his interest and concern for the Christian populace evident to the Sacred College and the Roman ambient. Pope Clement VIII had a reputation for his piety, unflinching in his faith and determined in his role as God’s shepherd on earth. He often tended and comforted the sick and poor at hospitals, and was known to pray and meditate on his knees regularly several times a day. He frequently participated in the pilgrimages to the Seven Churches in Rome and the Scala Santa, scaling the steps on his knees. Moreover, the Pope was a staunch promoter of the Devotions of the Forty Hours (*L’orazione delle quarant’ore*) and was a practitioner of the spiritual exercises. These two activities of prayer and meditation are central to understanding how Paleotti’s ideas of a naturalistic brand of sacred art would ultimately be successful in reaching the general populace: not only through the incitement of the emotions but through meditation.

Meditation in front of religious images had a long-standing history in the Catholic Church. Image devotion was practiced by saints and frequently inspired their visions.

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3 Ibid., 29.

4 Ibid., 27.
Meditation before images, however, was not only reserved for saints or religious personages. As Belting emphasized, meditative practices were also encouraged for the lay community: “With the devotional images that had provided saints with their visions, ordinary believers assured themselves of their participation in the ideal community of the Church.”

During the Tridentine and Post-Tridentine era, the emotional experiences procured from meditating upon images became an even more relevant affective vehicle for the Catholic Church in its mandate to reach out to the general populace. Worshippers were encouraged to recall the lives of Christ, the Virgin and the saints. This recollection would further stimulate contemplation of the stories in the context of their own salvation. Through meditation, every worshipper had the opportunity to reach spiritual enlightenment, and ultimately salvation. Spiritual transformation and conversion were no longer merely experienced by saints and extraordinary individuals, but could be attained by every man. It is thus significant that in the Post-Tridentine period the objective to reach the general populace was shared by not only clerics and theorists, but by religious congregations and orders.

The teachings and exercises of Filippo Neri and the Oratorians promoted not merely humble spirituality, but simplicity, immediacy, and affectivity. Several

Belting, Likeness and Presence. 411.

handbooks and guides to meditative exercises, including the Jesuit Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* (published in many editions beginning in 1548), were also published and widely disseminated throughout Italy. This meditative literature, primarily Spanish in origin, prescribed tangible visualization in meditation that directly related to the more natural and affective role and style of images in Post-Tridentine Italy. The Oratorians and the Jesuits were two religious entities in Rome that particularly promoted such devotional and meditational exercises, seeking a means to reach the *popolo*.

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The Oratorians

Paleotti’s association with the Oratorian circle is significant. His establishment of personal contacts and relationships with Neri’s Oratory provided a means by which to disseminate his theories and opinions on sacred art. The Devotion of the Forty Hours was introduced to Rome in 1550 by the founder of the Oratorians and future saint, Filippo Neri (1515-95).\(^8\) Neri was the center of a dynamic spiritual movement in Rome to whom many, including, Paleotti, would find themselves drawn. Whereas Paolo Prodi questioned the degree to which Paleotti was tied to Neri, the general affinity between the Cardinal’s Discorso and the saint’s spirituality (a connection which will be discussed later in this chapter), in my opinion, cannot be ignored.\(^9\) Moreover, several facts support a close association between these two Counter-Reformation protagonists. For example, Paleotti founded an Oratory at the Cathedral of Bologna in emulation of Neri’s Roman Oratory. Neri’s earliest biographer, Pietro Girolamo Bacci (1686) mentioned Paleotti as present at the Oratory on numerous occasions in conversation with the saint himself.\(^10\) Paleotti also dedicated his *De bono senectutis* (Rome, 1595) to Neri, whose portrait was also included

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\(^8\) Mark S. Weil, “The Devotion of the Forty Hours and Roman Baroque Illusions,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 221-22. The Devotions of the Forty Hours was a ceremony, which in the seventeenth century developed into a theatrical enterprise, involving the presentation of the Eucharist for forty hours. The Devotions instituted during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII was modeled after those practiced in Milan under another intimate of Neri, Archbishop of Milan and future saint (canonized in 1610), Carlo Borromeo. Borromeo’s rules for the Devotions also provided the model for the pope’s own guidelines published in November 1592.


\(^10\) Ibid., n. 18, 570-71.
in the work. The Oratorian orbit, in fact, included other key cardinals in the matrix of Paleotti’s own circle. Cardinal Federico Borromeo, S. Carlo Borromeo’s younger cousin and former protégé of Paleotti, was intimately tied to Neri (until his death in 1595) and the Oratorians during his long sojourn in Rome from 1586-1601. Neri was not only Federico’s confessor and spiritual guide, but also appears to have played a fatherly role after the death of his older cousin in 1584. In 1591, Federico was appointed to the commission in charge of the revision of the Sistine Vulgate (Clementina), which included the Jesuit Cardinals Francesco Toledo and Roberto Bellarmino, as well as the Oratorian Cardinal Agostino Valier. Federico served as the cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome from it official opening in 1593 until his elevation to Archbishop of Milan in 1595. He was replaced in this capacity at the Accademia by Cardinal Paleotti.


12 G. A. Gabrieli, “Federico Borromeo a Roma,” Archivio della R. Società romana di storia patria (1933-34): 159. Although Federico left for Milan upon his elevation to Archbishop in 1595, he returned to Rome less than a year later, and remained there until the autumn of 1601. See also Paolo Prodi, “Federico Borromeo,” in Dizionario degli Italiani, vol. 13 (Rome: Istituto degli Italiani, 1971), 36.


14 Alberti, Origine, dedicatory letter to Borromeo.
and Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte.\textsuperscript{15} Borromeo would later open his own Academy in Milan, in addition to a picture gallery with works donated from the Cardinal’s own collection.\textsuperscript{16} Del Monte (1549-1626), too, seems to have had direct contact with Neri and the Oratorians. In his seminal two-volume study on the cardinal, Zygmunt Ważbiński suggested that Del Monte was introduced to the Oratorian circle shortly after his arrival in Rome by Cardinal Ferdinando de’ Medici.\textsuperscript{17} This proposal is likely, but Del Monte would have other opportunities to meet and form a relationship with the Oratorians through colleagues and associates already linked with the Oratorian founder and his brethren. Del Monte was not only closely linked to Paleotti, but also Cardinal Federico Borromeo, and the Oratorian-Cardinals Baronio and Tarugi.

Cardinal Agostino Valier (1531-1606) was a close friend of both Carlo and Federico Borromeo. He was a member of Carlo’s Accademia delle Notti Vaticane in Rome, and would later write the saint’s biography, \textit{Vita e morte di S. Carlo Borromeo} in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Alberti, \textit{Origine}, dedicatory letter to Borromeo.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} See Borromeo, \textit{Musaeum}; Quint, \textit{Cardinal Federico Borromeo as a Patron}; Jones, \textit{Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana}. Borromeo’s Accademia del Disegno, Milan was officially founded in 1620, and the Pinacoteca two years earlier. Both institutions functioned to teach young artists how to appropriately and effectively paint sacred imagery.
\end{itemize}
1613, the same year of Carlo’s canonization. Valier also served on the commission to revise the Sistine Vulgate with Cardinal Federico Borromeo, to whom Valier dedicated numerous works. Like Paleotti, Valier founded his own Oratory in Verona in imitation of Neri’s, after being elevated to Archbishop of Verona in 1565. He served on the Commission for the Reform of Customs with Cardinal Paleotti, and two cardinals also associated with the Oratorians, Alessandro de’ Medici and Agostino Cusano.

Other cardinals close to Paleotti were also Oratorians, such as Silvio Antoniano, Cesare Baronio, and Francesco Maria Tarugi. Silvio Antoniano (1540-1603), promoted to the cardinalate by Pope Clement VIII in 1598, was a devoted disciple of Neri. He authored a book on Christian education (Tre libri dell’educazione cristiana de’figliuoli)

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18 Pullapilly, “Agostino Valier,” 308, 311. The Accademia delle Notti Vaticane was founded by S. Carlo Borromeo ca. 1560. Similar to the open and comfortable atmosphere of Neri’s Oratory, Borromeo’s Academy was also an informal gathering, but instead of lay brothers and pious individuals, the Accademia delle Notti Vaticane was composed of churchmen, intellectuals, and important citizens. The discussions in Neri’s Oratory and Borromeo’s Accademia, however, both centered on religion. See also Luigi Berra, L’Accademia delle Notti Vaticane fondata da San Carlo Borromeo (Rome: Max Bretschneider, 1915).


20 Ibid., 315.

21 Ibid., 168; Ponnelle and Bordet, San Filippo Neri, 471. Valier also authored a dialogue entitled, Philippus sive de laetitia christiana, a conversation which supposedly took place in Palazzo S. Marco in 1591. Among the interlocutors were: Filippo Neri, Silvio Antoniano, Cardinal Agostino Cusano, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, Lodovico de Torres, Marco Antonio Maffa, Cesare Baronio, and Gianfrancesco Bordino. Agostino Valier, Philippus sive da laetitia christiana (Verona, ca. 1591), in Due opere latine del preclarissimo Agostino Valerio, cardinale e vescovo di Verona (Verona: Veronae ex officina Iosephi Civelli, 1862).

at the urging of Carlo Borromeo, and was a member and one-time Principe of the Accademia delle Notti Vaticane. 23 His association with Cardinal Paleotti has been documented in letters published by Prodi. Antoniano elicited Paleotti’s advice on the iconography of Scipione Pulzone’s altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin for the Bandini Chapel in S. Silvestro al Quirinale. 24 Under Pope Clement VIII, Antoniano was conferred with the titles Master of the Chamber, Secretary of Latin Letters, Secretary of Papal Briefs, and was a member of the commission established by Pope Clement to revise the Breviary. 25 Cesare Baronio (1538-1607), like Antoniano, was promoted to the Cardinalate (5 June 1596) by Pope Clement VIII, and was an Oratorian. Baronio authored the important work on the history of the Church, Annales Ecclesiastici, at the behest and under the direction of Neri. Among the twelve books (published 1588-1607) of Baronio’s monumental work, volumes four, five, and six were dedicated to Pope Clement VIII to whom he also served as confessor. 26 In volume six (published 1595) Baronio also praised Cardinal Paleotti and his Discorso. Pope Clement’s high esteem for Baronio would also lead to his appointment as head of the Vatican Library in 1597, 27 Prefect of

23 Cardella, Memorie storiche, vol. 6, 70.


26 Von Pastor, History of the Popes, vol. 24, 446.

27 Cardella, Memorie storiche, vol. 6, 32.
the Congregation for the Reform of Churches in Rome\textsuperscript{28}, a member of the commission to reform the Breviary, and overseer of the Pope’s commission for the altarpieces of St. Peter’s.\textsuperscript{29} Cardinal Francesco Maria Tarugi (1525-1608) was an Oratorian, and like Antoniano and Baronio, he was elevated to cardinalate by Pope Clement VIII (5 June 1596).\textsuperscript{30} Tarugi was among the first disciples of Neri and was particularly close to the aging saint.

The significance of Paleotti’s association with the Oratorians, however, is not limited to considerations of the dissemination of his ideas. Paleotti’s “theology of nature” for sacred art and the Oratorian exercises also share a common goal: using a simple language (one pictorial, the other verbal) to reach the general populace. In fact, both Paleotti and Neri believed that paintings could effectively function as meditative aids.

Oratorian Spirituality

As the Oratorians were not a formal religious order, but an informal community of priests and laymen who participated in religious exercises, they had no official rule, nor did Neri leave behind many in the way of writings of a spiritual or theoretical nature.

\textsuperscript{28} Cardella, \textit{Memorie storiche}, vol. 6, 32.

\textsuperscript{29} Von Pastor, \textit{History of the Popes}, vol. 24, 474; see also Louise Rice, \textit{The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter’s. Outfitting the Basilica 1621-1666} (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press in association with the American Academy in Rome, 1997).

\textsuperscript{30} Cardella, \textit{Memorie storiche}, vol. 6, 17; Francesco Maria Tarugi and Cesare Baronio were both elevated to the cardinalate by Pope Clement VIII in his second series of promotions on 5 June 1596.
There is, however, much we can safely conclude about Neri and Oratorian spirituality, and even Neri’s position on sacred art, through the words of his followers, and eyewitness accounts of his opinions. To be sure, Neri had power, whether he wanted it or not. He served as confessor, spiritual guide, and friend to key churchmen, and even the pope. The processions he would lead on feast days to the seven pilgrimage churches would sometimes number around four thousand.\footnote{Donnelly, “The Congregation of the Oratory,” 194.} His asceticism, humility, and piety were legendary, and his followers and admirers many. It was here at Neri’s Oratory, in the Oratorian mother church, Santa Maria della Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova), that Paleotti found a spirituality and ideology that complemented his own: to tend and reach the populace through simplicity, affectivity, and immediacy.

Neri’s Oratory was founded upon the basic principal of simplicity. The Oratorian exercises often began with silent prayer, vernacular hymns, and a reading from a devotional work. After the reading was completed, all in attendance had the opportunity to ask Filippo to share his thoughts and insights on the subject. This would further stimulate more dialogue among the participants. Then a prepared discourse followed. The atmosphere of these meetings was clearly open and congenial, but the significance of these Oratorian exercises was primarily in the manner the readings and discourses were delivered.\footnote{Ibid., The openness of these meetings is attested by the fact that on Sundays and feast days women and children were allowed to participate.} According to Neri’s early biographer, Bacci: “Father Filippo ordered those that were speaking not to enter into scholastic material, nor to go searching for concepts...
too exquisite, but to speak of useful and mundane things.” The speakers were required to address their audience not only in plain and simple language, but they needed to speak to their listeners’ hearts. The Oratorian mode of address embraced the need to reach the common man, or in Paleotti’s words the idioti. This intent is underscored by the words of the Oratorian Antonio Talpa in his 1567 Memoriale, in which he proclaimed the Oratorian exercises as most effective and immediate when they excite exhortation and fervor, by speaking to the emotions rather than the intellect. The Oratorian position that sermons and discourses must be immediate, simple, and affective reflects Paleotti’s prescriptions for sacred imagery. Although nothing is known of Filippo Neri’s theoretical position on sacred painting, we do have words written by some of Neri’s closest disciples, which along with experiential accounts, not only indicate that the Oratorians placed a high value on naturalism in art, but understood the function of painting as meditative aid.

Neri was known not only to have experienced fervent ecstasy before images, but he was also reported to have seen miraculous visions. These visions were often associated with images or sculptures to which he held special private devotion. The inventory of Neri’s belongings conducted after his death in 1595 included numerous small devotional works that were particularly iconic in nature: images of the Virgin, the

33 Abbamondi, “L’Apostolato,” 139: “Padre Filippo commando a quelli che ragionano che non entrassero in materie scolastiche, né andassero cercando concetti troppo esquisiti, ma dicessero cose utili e popolari.”

34 Cistellani, San Filippo Neri, vol. 1, 86.

35 Ibid.
Crucifixion, and the Pietà. This fact is of special interest in light of the predominantly simple, iconic (yet naturalistic) altarpieces in Santa Maria della Vallicella, including Scipione Pulzone’s *Crucifixion* (Fig. 28), Federico Barocci’s *Visitation* (Fig. 29), and Caravaggio’s *Entombment* (which will be discussed in the next chapter). Furthermore, one finds in the inventory of Neri’s library not only numerous books and treatises on meditation, but books dealing with spiritual visions, and particularly interesting in terms of naturalism, several compendia of Aristotle’s works, and commentaries on his work. It is clear that Neri valued images as incitements to meditation, but the contents of his library also validate the value he gave to meditation and nature. It is thus interesting and relevant to consider that a spiritual and theoretical interchange between Neri, the Oratorians, and Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti occurred, particularly between 1586, the year of his arrival in Rome, and 1595, the year of Neri’s death.

In his article, “Cultura e predicazione nelle immagini dell’Oratorio,” Alessandro Zucconi linked the Oratorian emphasis on simple, immediate, and affective discourses

36 Costanza Barbieri, “Invisibilia per visibilia: S. Filippo Neri, le immagini e la contemplazione,” in *La regola e la fama*, 64.

with images realized in the Oratorian environment and in their new church, Santa Maria della Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova). He cited an important remark made by Baronio regarding the painted wood Crucifixion commissioned from a pupil of Daniele da Volterra for the Congregazione della Carità di Sora. In a letter of April 1564, Baronio praised the simple wood Crucifixion and stated that the devotion of a work is more abundant the closer it approaches the natural. Baronio’s appreciation for the “natural” can be further observed in the new altarpieces for Santa Maria in Vallicella. For instance, in Pulzone’s 1586 Crucifixion (Fig. 28), Zuccari observed that the figure of Christ resembled the Sora Crucifixion in its anatomical details, and that even the cross corresponded to the chestnut wood of the sculpture whose simplicity Baronio so admired. Moreover, the realism of the altarpiece is accentuated by the trickles of blood that flow down the arms and body of Christ, by the quiet and solemn mood, and by the pathetic and somber gestures and sentiments of the protagonists. Pulzone’s Crucifixion embodied the simplicity, immediacy, and affectivity prescribed by Neri for Oratorian discourses, the naturalism appreciated by Baronio, as well as Paleotti’s instructions for sacred art. Pulzone, moreover, adopted Lombard tenebrism in order to project the figures

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39 BV, Ms. Q 46, f. 39v. This text is published in Mario Morganti, Il Cardinale Cesare Baronio e la città di Sora. Dalle sue Memorie ai Cimeli nella Chiesa di S. Bartolomeo (Sora: Isola Liri, 1961), 27-28; and Zuccari, “Cultura e predicazione, 341.

40 Zuccari, “Cultura e predicazione,” 341.

41 Ibid. Zuccari places also places an emphasis on the “orant” gestures that visually identifies the work with the function of oratory.
forward, thus accentuating their three-dimensionality while simultaneously making them physically and psychologically tangible and present for the viewer. In his seminal book on Pulzone, Federico Zeri observed that the artist’s style was influenced by and derived from two sources: the Flemish, and the so-called “Primitives” of the Quattrocento. He recognized in the art of Pulzone, a particular Flemish quality of meticulousness in the observation of nature, especially in portraits, combined with a dramatic, yet static piousness (arte senza tempo) associated with the artists of the Quattrocento. Interestingly, Zeri considered these qualities as distantly originating from Lombardy, but pursued the point no further. Zeri’s designation of Pulzone’s style, however, as an “art without time” (arte senza tempo) effectively encapsulated the feel of timelessness we sense in his Crucifixion. There is no physical background, no historical or geographical anchors to remove or distance the scene from the present. In essence, it corresponded to the deficiencies of lontananza, or absence, that Paleotti claimed the imitation of nature would remedy.

The significance of naturalism for the Oratorians can also be related to the efficacy of a naturalistic sacred image as a meditative aid. There are numerous accounts of Filippo Neri’s meditative ecstasies in front of paintings. The most famous account is that of his emotional, spiritual transport in front of Federico Barocci’s Visitation (Fig. 29), in Santa Maria della Vallicella. According to Neri’s early biographer Bacci: “[Filippo Neri] was again in the Chapel of the Visitation, where he would willingly

remain, very much enjoying that image by Barocci; and placed himself to sit, as usual when alone, on a small chair, enraptured, unknowingly, in a sweet ecstasy.” Barocci’s (1535-1612) style certainly differed from that of Pulzone (ca. 1550-1598), yet there is also a remarkable affinity between them. The differences in tenor can be explained by their respective subjects. Pulzone’s altarpiece reflects the solemnity and grief of an episode from Christ’s Passion, while Barocci’s captures the mutual joy of pending motherhood for the Virgin and St. Elizabeth. Ian Verstegan fittingly described Barocci’s style as one that “combines sweetness with realism.” Barocci’s Visitation certainly differs chromatically and stylistically from Pulzone’s Crucifixion. The sweetness of Barocci’s altarpiece melds a high value color palette with soft brushwork, while Pulzone’s is mainly composed of primary colors (made to appear saturated by the contrast with the dark background) and a hard linearity. Yet both are rooted in the tangible and the present. Barocci did not choose to utilize a dark, nondescript background as did Pulzone, but the deep shadows that engulf the architectural frame of Elizabeth’s house projects the vibrantly garbed protagonists forward much in the same manner as Pulzone’s figures have been. Moreover, Barocci incorporated exquisite realistic details in the rendering of the everyday objects, such as the basket of chickens held by the female onlooker on the right, her straw hat, the brass vessel at the left foreground, and the

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43 Barbieri, “Invisibilia per visibilia,” 66-67: “[Filippo Neri] stava un’altra volta nella cappella della Visitazione, dove si tratteneva volentieri, piacendogli assai quell’immagine del Barocci; e postosi a sedere, secondo il solito suo, sopra una sedia picciola, fu rapito, non accorgendosene, in una dolcissima estasi.”

donkey who seems surreptitiously to capture the gaze of the viewer. Thus despite the ornamental color, Barocci’s *Visitation* was still conceived in terms of the mundane and plausible. Here, a momentous, joyous Biblical event is transformed into one that occurs in the present: an event taken from the everyday world. As in the utilization of a quotidian language in discourse and sermons where immediacy, simplicity, and affectivity were paramount, a similar application of a “common language” of the everyday and natural in painting could exhort and incite meditation and ultimately spiritual ecstasy within the viewer.

The Jesuits

The Jesuits differed from the more relaxed environment of the Oratorians as they were a formally organized religious order (with a designated leader and Constitution) and served as the Pope’s extended arms in their missionary quests to convert the known world to Christianity. Ignatius of Loyola (ca. 1491-1556) was the founder of the Society of Jesus, and served as the Society’s General from 1540, when the Order received its official

45 These iconographical details probably would not have met with Paleotti’s approval. Similar details were deemed inappropriate in Paleotti’s *Discorso*. For instance, in Libro 2, Capitolo 32, Paleotti indicated that it was inappropriate to paint in the Rest on the Flight into Egypt, the Madonna with a vessel in hand, retrieving water for the Christ Child from a river. Nor was it appropriate to show S. Joseph taking a branch with fruit to hand to the Christ Child. Although he does not identify any artist specifically, Paleotti’s description, in fact, is in perfect concord with Barocci’s ca. 1580-83 *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (S. Stefano, Piobbico). Paleotti identified these inclusions as curiosities that were not mentioned in the Scriptures and do not add to the devotion of the work. He made exceptions for non-Scripturally based additions if they helped to move the viewer. Regardless, in essence, Barocci’s grounding of the subject in the tangible and naturalistic, corresponds to Paleotti’s ideas for a sacred style based on the imitation of nature. See Paleotti, *Discorso*, 206v.
recognition and approval by Pope Paul III in his bull *Regimini militantis* (27 September), until his death in 1556. Ignatius, however, was also among the greatest mystics of the sixteenth century. Begun in the 1520s, his *Spiritual Exercises*, while regarded as the primary source of Jesuit spirituality, was also highly influential upon subsequent guides and practices on meditation. The Jesuits, like the Oratorians, were key practitioners and promulgators of meditation using tangible visualization (“composition of place”) of biblical scenes as a means to reach every Christian. Pope Clement VIII, while tired of the political machinations within the Company, still held the Jesuits and their founder in high esteem.\(^\text{47}\)

Pope Clement VIII was the first pope to elevate two Jesuits to the cardinalate: Francesco de Toledo, and Roberto Bellarmino. Francesco de Toledo (1532-96) was one of four individuals, two of whom were the Pope’s relatives, raised to the cardinalate in the first promotion under Clement on 17 September 1593.\(^\text{48}\) In 1594, Toledo attempted to resign the cardinalate in order to devote himself to the Jesuit mission; however, he was not successful.\(^\text{49}\) Toledo’s prominent role in the court of Pope Clement VIII can be partly

\(^\text{46}\) Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*.

\(^\text{47}\) Von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol., 24, 156-57, 165. It was during the reign of Pope Clement VIII, that a group of Jesuits attempted to modify the Constitutions originally drawn up by Ignatius himself.

\(^\text{48}\) Cardella, *Memorie storiche*, vol. 6, 3. In addition to Toledo, the other three individuals who received the red hat in Pope Clement’s first promotion were: Lucio Sasso da Nola, and the Pope’s nephews, Pietro Aldobrandini and Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini.

\(^\text{49}\) Cardella, *Memorie storiche*, vol. 6, 5.
explained by his close friendship with Cardinal Giovanni Aldobrandini (the Pope’s brother) who assisted in Toledo’s elevation as Apostolic Preacher (Predicatore Apostolico).\textsuperscript{50} Toledo functioned as Pope Clement’s theologian and occasional confessor until his death in 1596.\textsuperscript{51} He was an important collaborator on the commission for the revision of the Sistine Vulgate, which also included Cardinals Federico Borromeo, Agostino Valier, and his Jesuit compatriot, Roberto Bellarmino.\textsuperscript{52}

Bellarmino (1542-1641) was made cardinal on 3 March 1599 by Pope Clement VIII, shortly after the death of Toledo.\textsuperscript{53} In addition to serving as a collaborator on the revision for the Sistine Vulgate in 1591, he also wrote the preface to the revised edition, known as the\textit{Sixto Clementina} in 1592.\textsuperscript{54} Following the death of Toledo in 1596, Bellarmino assumed the position as the Pope’s theologian and “spiritual father” from 1597-99.\textsuperscript{55} Bellarmino penned two key works dealing with the controversy over images. His 1588\textit{Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei} and the 1594\textit{De imaginibus sacris et profanis} demonstrated an awareness of Paleotti’s 1582\textit{Discorso} with its inflections of art based in nature. For Bellarmino, as was the case in Paleotti’s treatise,\

\textsuperscript{50} Cardella,\textit{Memorie storiche}, vol. 6, 3.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{52} Cardella,\textit{Memorie storiche}, vol. 6, 168; and Von Pastor,\textit{History of the Popes}, vol. 24, 223.
\textsuperscript{53} Cardella,\textit{Memorie storiche}, vol. 6, 74; and Von Pastor,\textit{History of the Popes}, vol. 24, 445.
\textsuperscript{54} Cardella,\textit{Memorie storiche}, vol. 6, 74.
\textsuperscript{55} Von Pastor,\textit{History of the Popes}, vol. 24, 167.
naturalism in sacred art was equated to truth. Bellarmino appears to have also owned a small collection of paintings in his private apartments that were extolled as exemplary models of piety, and vehicles for meditation. These included portraits of Pope Clement VIII, Cardinal Roberto de’ Nobili, and Cardinal Carlo Borromeo.

Paleotti knew both Toledo and Bellarmino, but his ties to them were not as strong as those he had with the Oratorians. Regardless, Paleotti’s connection with the Jesuits went well beyond mere acquaintance. In 1593, the Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1533-1611) wrote his own treatise on sacred art. The treatise formed one chapter of his Bibliotheca selecta qua agitur de ratio studiorum, a compilation – a bibliography of sorts – of key authors and texts. This chapter on painting was entitled after Horace’s dictum, “Pictura similis poesis,” and was later published as a separate tract in 1595 called Tractatio de Poësi & Pictura ethica, humana, & fabulosa collate cum vera, honesta, & sacra. In his brief Tractatio, Possevino emphasized that truth and the imitation of nature in painting efficaciously moved the viewer’s emotions, a position the Jesuit author shared with Paleotti, whom he cited in his work. More significantly, however, one must take into

56 Bailey, Between Renaissance and Baroque, 11

57 Ibid.

58 Possevino, Tractatio. Pope Clement VIII appears to have held great respect for Possevino. According, to Pastor, Pope Clement was disappointed when Claudio Aquaviva, General of the Jesuits, refused his request for Possevino’s services as companion on his trip to Poland. See Von Pastor, History of the Popes, vol. 24, 169.
account that Paleotti not only practiced Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*, but key sections of his *Discorso* seem to be informed by the instructions and progressive steps of the guide.\(^{59}\)

Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* were published and approved by Pope Paul III in 1548, but this extraordinary guide to meditation and contemplation was already being utilized by the Jesuits long before in manuscript form.\(^{60}\) The *Exercises* drew upon the traditions of meditational tracts such as the Carthusian Ludolf of Saxony’s (1300-78) *Vita Jesu Christi*, and the Meditations vitaecristi and Thomas à Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ* (ca. 1471),\(^{61}\) but were intended as a specifically Jesuit guide for retreat directors, not participants. The seemingly rigid construct of the *Exercises*’ four-week course, however, simultaneously allowed a relative freedom for the participants, for the “steps” or “exercises” were adapted according to the needs of each individual. This freedom of implementation is crucial in understanding the popularity of the *Exercises* and its bearing upon the Counter-Reformation Church’s desire to reach the general populace. The *Exercises* facilitated and encouraged a personal, direct conversation with God. It was a relationship formerly considered possible only for the “elected” few. Ignatius’

\(^{59}\) See Chapter Two, p. 39. Equally relevant in terms of Paleotti’s association with the Jesuits was the fact that the Jesuit Francesco Palmio was among those whom Paleotti consulted while drafting the *Discorso*.

\(^{60}\) According to John O’Malley, the essential elements of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* were already written (or at least formulated) as early as 1525. See O’Malley, “The Society of Jesus,” 139.

emphases on nature, the important role given to the use of the senses, and the practice of “composition of place” are key aspects of the *Spiritual Exercises* that closely connects it to the Tridentine decree’s advocacy for affective sacred images, and Paleotti’s promotion of a more natural and tangible style in religious painting.

St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* were divided into four weeks of exercises which, according to E. Allison Peers, was related to the traditional three-fold way of mystical practices: “the first week’s meditations have a certain “analogy” with the Purgative Way, those of the second and third week with the Illuminative Way, and those of the fourth week with the Unitive Way.”  

Each exercise, however, typically began with the “composition of place,” where the individual was asked to conjure a mental image of the place or scene on which they are to meditate. This step called for the individual to use his senses to proceed with the practice of the various meditations. The application of the senses to imagine the sights, sounds, and smells of biblical scenes enables the individual to conjure a mental image, and allows the participant to experience the subject and story in a tangible and thus affective way. The “composition of place” attained through the senses and its appeal to the worshipper’s emotions was followed by recalling other moments or related events connected to this mental image and even in the individual’s own past. This step, while distinct from the former, was still closely related to the affective function of “composition of place.” In her study on meditation, Mary Carruthers asserted that the craft of monastic *memoria* was a locational practice that

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63 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 83-84.
involved the making of mental pictures; all memories were thus also mental pictures.\textsuperscript{64}

Even here, however, Carruthers contended that emotions play a significant role.

Some traditions in ancient philosophy also recognized an emotional component in all memory. Memory images are composed of two elements: a “likeness” (similitudo) that serves as a cognitive cue or token to the “matter” or res being remembered and intention or the “inclination” or “attitude” we have to the remembered experience, which helps both to classify and to retrieve it. Thus, memories are all images, and they are all and always emotionally colored.\textsuperscript{65}

This process of recollection was then followed by a colloquy in which the participant thanked and acknowledged God for a particular revelation. This involved the collection and placement of the mental pictures and associated emotions into a comprehensible context, in which, once again, “composition of place” still played a pivotal role. For instance, if the participant was asked first to meditate upon the Crucifixion, the next step required further mental visualization of other related moments or stories from Christ’s Passion. By putting together these moments of Christ’s Passion, participants would then be led to acknowledge their role in their own salvation. The “composition of place” was essential not only to making mental pictures during meditation, but also to arouse the viewers’ soul affectively through tangible and palpable visualizations. They are equivalent to the words heard or read during Mass and sermons, but now visually retold and tangibly \textit{re}-created in the theater of the participant’s own mind. It is this practice that

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\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 14.
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leads participants to the self-revelatory fact of their own salvation, bringing them ever closer to spiritual enlightenment or conversation with God.

In his 1582 Discorso, Paleotti framed the three “delights” – sensuous, rational, spiritual - into a viewing scheme, merging the process of looking at paintings with that of meditation, as found in Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises. The senses are the immediate vehicle through which “viewing” (Paleotti) and “meditating” or conjuring mental images (Ignatius) began. Both Paleotti’s viewing scheme and the First Prelude in Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises begin with seeing or imagining (the composition of place). The importance of “tangible presences” was thus essential to the function and ultimate goals of viewing paintings, and meditational exercises. The “composition of place” was then followed by discourse, in which viewers or meditators began a rational conversation with themselves, applying what they saw physically or mentally in their “visualized image” with the subject’s meaning and significance. The final step involved a direct conversation with God.

Paleotti’s viewing process thus grew out of exercises on meditation popularized by monastic tradition and revived and amplified during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Paleotti was certainly aware of Ignatius, as he himself practiced the Jesuit’s Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius did not equate the process of “composition of place” or the making of mental images in meditation with paintings. Paleotti, did however, make this association by comparing man’s mind to the panel of the painter: “the mind of man can be compared with the panel of a painter, where every day, [artists] are designing, adding and changing one thing or another . . . in this way, our minds are like a
Loyola’s emphasis on “composition of place” in his Spiritual Exercises, while not specifically associated with meditation in front of paintings, still evoked the need for conjuring tangible visualizations or presences. Paleotti, in his Discorso, made this connection when describing how verisimilitude in images could bridge the gap between temporal and locational distance, or more specifically, between the viewer’s reality and that which was portrayed in images.

Despite the silence on the use of paintings as vehicles for meditation in the Spiritual Exercises, it is unquestionable that Loyola valued not only imagined pictures, but also real ones. He owned a small collection of devotional paintings for meditative purposes, and like Filippo Neri, Loyola was also known to have experienced visions. Moreover, he believed that the sense of sight was the most efficacious in affecting the emotions. These, however, are not the only parallels between the positions of Loyola and Paleotti. Loyola’s love of nature, often cited by his early biographers, connects his principle of composition of place to the significance of naturalism in sacred images. In his 1572 biography of Loyola, Pedro de Ribadeniera remarked upon the importance Ignatius placed on the senses, and how the observation of nature could lead to spiritual transformation:

. . . the sight of a plant, a blade of grass, a leaf, a flower, or a fruit, of whatever kind, the contemplation of a tiny worm or an equally insignificant creature would be sufficient to transport him into the seventh

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66 Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, Capitolo 2, 9r-9v.

67 Bailey, Between Renaissance and Baroque, 7.
heaven. He would penetrate to the deepest hidden recesses of the senses, and from each little thing that he saw he drew most profitable doctrine and counsel for instruction in the spiritual life. 68

This appreciation for nature and its function in meditation was also reflected in the Spiritual Exercises. In the introductory directives for the general examination of conscience in the First Week of exercises, Ignatius emphasized the importance of meditating upon nature for God was “in every creature by His essence, power, and presence.” 69 In the second exercise of the First Week, where the participant is in the process of self-examination, Ignatius further invoked the divine presence of God in nature:

This is a cry of wonder accompanied by surging emotion as I pass in review of all creatures. How is it that they have permitted me to live, and have sustained me in life! . . . And the heavens, sun, moon, stars, and the elements; the fruits, birds, fishes, and other animals – why have they all been at my service? 70

The most powerful statement on the spiritual value of nature, however, is found in the specific exercise pertaining to the “Contemplation to Attain the Love of God,” which forms part of the addendum to the Spiritual Exercises.

This is to reflect how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man bestowing understanding. So He dwells in me and gives me being, life sensation, intelligence; and makes a temple of me, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty . . . This is to consider how God works and labors for me in all creatures upon

68 Ribadeneira, Vida, Book 5, Chapter 1, 472; cited and translated by Peers, Studies of the Spanish Mystics, vol. 1, 22.

69 Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, 18.

70 Ibid., 25.
the face of the earth, that is, He conducts Himself as one who labors. Thus, in the heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc., He gives being, conserves them, confers life and sensation, etc. Then I will reflect on myself.\textsuperscript{71}

Loyola’s ideology of nature thus corresponded perfectly with Paleotti’s own as outlined in his \textit{Discorso}. Nature was a reflection of God’s creation and providence and, in this capacity, naturalistic paintings could efficaciously stimulate meditation by means of the eyes.

Loyola, while recognized today as a key figure in the period of the Counter-Reformation, was not the only Spanish mystic whose works infiltrated the minds and hearts of the Catholic faithful. The written works of the Dominican preacher, Luis de Granada (1504-88), revealed a powerful voice for ideas and practices of meditation. Ignatius, Granada’s contemporary, not only admired him as a model of piety, but also recommended to the participants of his \textit{Spiritual Exercises} to read the works of the Dominican priest.\textsuperscript{72} Support for Granada and his works, significantly, extended to the Italian peninsula, and reached key cardinals who effectuated reforms in their own dioceses and held considerable influence in Counter-Reformation Rome.\textsuperscript{73} Granada was

\textsuperscript{71} Loyola, \textit{Spiritual Exercises}, 80.

\textsuperscript{72} Peers, \textit{Studies of the Spanish Mystics}, 27; Peers quotes from the Directory to the \textit{Spiritual Exercises}, chap. 21: “Some book may be read for the remaining time, but of such a kind as will nourish piety rather than busy the intellect with novelties, e.g., passages from the works of St. Bernard or Gerson on the Imitation of Christ or Luis de Granada.”

\textsuperscript{73} It is worth noting that Filippo Neri owned three books penned by Granada. See p. 88, note 37.
highly esteemed by Carlo Borromeo who often preached from Granada’s works. In a letter addressed to Pope Gregory XIII (r. 1572-1585) dated 28 June 1582, Borromeo lauded the works of the Dominican for its piety and value in the instruction of the faithful.

. . . that they were written in the vernacular for every condition of person, demonstrating to them the living road to serve the Lord, and incites them to learn it, and how much aid he brings the theologians, especially to instruct those who have to preach and teach others; I do not know that in this kind there is today a man who is more deserving than him in the Holy Church.

In the same letter, Borromeo further mentioned that Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti held equal regard for Granada’s works: “. . . as having reasoned with Cardinal Paleotti, he also showed to have the same sentiment regarding his [Granada] works.” It seems, in fact, that Borromeo’s appeal and justification of Granada’s works led Pope Gregory XIII to sanction his work. The Pope formally approved Granada’s work in a letter dated 21 July 1582, which appeared in Granada’s Introducción del Símbolo de la Fede published in 1584.

74 Chorpenning, “Another Look at Caravaggio,” 150.

75 Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Segr.Stato, Cardinali, n. 93, 220r: “. . . che sono scritti volgarmente ad ogni stato di persone, in dimostrargli la viva strada di servire al Signore, et incitarli ad apprenderla et quanto aiuto apportino i latini, specialmente per istruir quelli che hanno da predicare et insegnare altrui; talmonte che io non sò, che in queste genere vi sia hoggidi huomo più benemerito della chiesa santa . . . .”

76 ASV, Segr.Stato, Cardinali, n. 93, 220v: “. . . quanto che havendoni ragionato col Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, egli ancora ha mostrato di havere il medesimo sento intorno à i meriti suoi.”

77 Peers, Studies of the Spanish Mystics, vol. 1, 30, n. 3.
Granada had also made a similar correlation between meditation and painting as Paleotti in his 1561 *Brief Memorial and Guide to the Duties of a Christian*. According to Granada, “[the meditator] should represent each mystery as present to him here and now. The representation of these mysteries is a function of the imagination, which knows how a painter would portray them.” This directive was not unusual or original. Indeed, it forms a part of the tradition of meditation, and had already appeared in Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*. Granada, however, made an important correlation between the meditative exercises of “composition of place” and painting; something that Loyola only alluded to, but never explicitly stated. Granada’s *opere*, like Loyola’s, were by the mid-sixteenth century translated into Italian and widely distributed.

Another topic that played a large part in the manuals and tracts on meditation was the function of “darkness”. The increased interest and value placed upon the visible world (as expressed by Paleotti, the Oratorians, and the Jesuits) and the popular practice of meditation, in this aspect can be correlated to the artists’ use of the Lombard “dark manner” of painting, from Leonardesque *sfumato* to deep Caravaggesque tenebrism. The translation of religious themes into the visible truth of the earthly world provided a means

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78 Cited and translated from the Spanish by Chorpenning, “Another Look at Caravaggio,” 154: “Each day the Christian should select one or two or three episodes of the life of Christ for his meditation. He should represent each mystery as present to him here and now. The representation of these mysteries is a function of the imagination, which knows how a painter would portray them.”

79 Ibid., 150. Granada’s *Book of Prayer* (1554), for instance, was translated into Italian in 1556 and there were two dozen editions published between 1556 and 1610. Moreover, Granada’s works were cited and recommended to reader, for instance, by St. Francis de Sales in his *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609).
by which the common worshipper could bridge the gap between past and present, between heaven and earth. The character of incorporating shadowy settings enhanced not only the three-dimensional relief of forms, thus their tangibility, but also had the element of the mystical, of revealing and concealing.  

The artificial cangianti of mid-Cinquecento painting utilized to designate a divine or spiritual world was replaced in the late Cinquecento and early Seicento by a dark, shadowy world, which still alluded to the mystical, and divine, but one that was now approachable. A Spanish descendent of the works of Loyola and Granada, St. John of the Cross (1542-91) in his ca. 1582 Dark Night of the Soul, explained that it was the path through darkness that leads to spiritual enlightenment and union with God.

\[\ldots\] although this happy night brings darkness to the spirit, it does so only to give it light in everything \ldots\] This dark night of loving fire, as it purges in the darkness, so also in the darkness it enkindles the soul \ldots\] God purges these souls and illuminates them, giving them knowledge \ldots\] So immense is the spiritual light of God, that the nearer we approach it, the more it blinds and darkens us.  

This beginning stage of darkness, or purgation, was also present in Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises, and would later reappear in devotional tracts by Cardinal Federico Borromeo. One could equate the tenebrist paintings of the late Cinquecento and early

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81 Loyola’s and Granada’s respective manuals enjoyed a long authority prompting other tracts on meditation well into the seventeenth century. St. John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul, ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image, 1990), 119, 136, 137, 156.

82 Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises, Borromeo’s I tre libri delle laudi divine and Del Modo di dare gli esercitii a persone capaci (undated manuscript) have many affinities
Seicento with the path to enlightenment through meditation. The state of darkness pierced by an unseen, divine light is the visual transformation of a worshipper, from the initial period of purgation, to enlightenment. The light, moreover, revealed the naturalistic and tangible figures and settings, making truth visibly apparent.

The intricate relationship between naturalism and the function of light and darkness as visual stimulators for meditation is made plain in Giovanni Battista Crespi’s (ca. 1565-1632, also known as Cerano) ca. 1610 oil on canvas painting (Fig. 30), currently in the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Cerano’s painting depicts Carlo Borromeo, Paleotti’s close friend and colleague, who shared equally strong ties with the Oratorians and Jesuits. Borromeo too practiced regular meditation and recognized the affective power of meditating before veristic images. The episode captured in Cerano’s painting refers to Carlo Borromeo’s visit to the Sacro Monte di Varallo to practice the Spiritual Exercises.83 The Sacro Monte at Varallo (Fig. 31), founded in 1486 (by Bernardino Caimi), reconstructed the far-away Holy Places of Palestine by means of extremely realistic mise-en-scene.84 Each chapel interior was filled with life-size, realistic

with Granada’s work. See also Jones, Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana, 36, 65-68.

83 Paolo Biscottini, ed., Carlo e Federico, La luce dei Borromeo nella Milano spagnola, exh. cat., Museo Diocesano, Milan, 5 November 2005 – 7 May 2006 (Milan: Museo Diocesano di Milano, 2005), 259. S. Carlo Borromeo actively advocated practicing the Spiritual Exercises. The association between Spanish literature on meditation and style holds particular interest and validity as Lombardy was under Spanish rule from 1525 (Battle of Pavia) to 1706.

sculptures of figures acting out the event in the original setting (Fig. 32). They were primarily made of terracotta and painted with naturalistic colors, and included real hair and glass eyes to enhance their realism. One of the chapels favored by Borromeo was the Cappella del Sepolcro that contained the statue of the dead Christ, before which the cardinal was known to pray at night, remaining there for a long period of time. In Cerano’s depiction, Borromeo meditates before a veristic sculpture of the Dead Christ that the artist paints as if it were a real flesh-and-blood person; it is as if Borromeo’s meditation has made the statue come to life. Borromeo is shown as if he were really kneeling before the dead body of Christ, just as the viewer meditates upon this very tangible image of the Cardinal, immersed in darkness. As meditating before a veristic statue of Christ brought the figure to life for Borromeo, Cerano’s painting too miraculously “comes alive” for the viewer who contemplates it.

Paintings of mystical and miraculous visions resulting from prayer or meditation abound in Post-Tridentine Italy. Cerano’s painting serves as a visual document of a miraculous occurrence made possible through the meditation of sacred art, albeit in sculpture, not painting. Paleotti had already made it clear in his 1582 Discorso that naturalistic sacred paintings could function as vehicles for meditation. The practices and instruction on meditation by the Oratorians and Spanish mystics, thus suggest significant, and interesting parallels not only with Paleotti’s “theology of nature,” but also with the Lombard naturalistic style of tangible presence. It cannot be mere coincidence

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85 He had also dedicated an entire chapter on miraculous effects and events that occurred as a result of meditating upon a sacred image. See Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 1, Capitolo 26, “De i varii effetti notabili causati dalle Imagini pie, & divote,” 77v-80v.
that the Oratorians and Jesuits also shared a number of artists, including Girolamo Muziano, Scipione Pulzone, Durante Alberti, Andrea Lilio, Giuseppe Cesari (Cavaliere d’Arpino), Paul Bril, and Peter Paul Rubens.

The Accademia di San Luca

Another critical entity in the Roman environment during the last two decades of the Cinquecento was the Accademia di San Luca. The foundation of the Accademia in Rome occurred after a long gestation period. From the beginning, however, the function of the Accademia remained consistent: to teach artists how to execute sacred art. It is significant that the foundation of the Accademia di San Luca was realized during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII. Almost immediately after ascending to the papal throne, Pope Clement VIII made evident his concern for the current state of sacred art. He immediately proclaimed a general visitation of all the churches, religious orders, and pious institutions, and organized a commission of cardinals and bishops to undertake the laborious task.  

86 Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Misc. Armadio VII, N.3. Visitations of Pope Clement VIII (1592-1596): 1. San Giovanni in Laterano (14 June 1592); 2. S. Maria Maggiore (6 July 1592); 3. S. Pietro in Vaticano (16 July 1592); 4. S. Marco (26 July 1592); 5. SS. Apostoli (8 August 1592); 6. S. Spirito in Sassia (church and hospital – 31 August 1592); 7. S. Marcello (church and convent (26 October 1592); 8. S. Maria in Trastevere (21 November 1592); 9. S. Lorenzo in Damaso (18 December 1592); 10. S. Lorenzo in Lucina (24 March 1593); 11. S. Maria della Consolazione (26 March 1593); 12. Capuchin convent and friary of St. Francis (7 July 1593); 13. S. Maria sopra Rotonda (26 July 1593); 14. S. Eustachio (18 August 1593); 15. S. Maria in via Lata (22 September 1593); 16. S. Angelo al foro Piscario (6 October 1593); 17. Church of the Society of Jesus (4 January 1594); 18. Church and convent of Transpontina (5 February 1594); 19. S. Maria del Popolo (5 March 1594); 20. SS. Trinità dei Monti (19 August 1594); 21. S. Maria dell’Aracoeli (22 February 1595); 22. S. Maria sopra Minerva (19
participated in these visitations. In the end, the Pope ordered the restoration and decoration of more than thirty chapels, and requested that adequate pictorial ornamentation for liturgical purposes be made to fourteen of them. In 1593, just one year after assuming the papal throne, Pope Clement VIII officially sanctioned the foundation of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome. The early history of the Accademia di San Luca is currently being reconstructed by a monumental project at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. This project when completed will fill critical gaps in the early history of the Accademia. The history that has already been established, however, is relevant to Paleotti’s vision for sacred art formulated upon the basis of naturalism.

The earliest proposed date for the protracted initiative to found an Accademia is ca. 1570. In his 1678 Felsina pittrice, Carlo Cesare Malvasia credited the Bolognese painter

June 1596); 23. S. Prassede (7 July 1596); 24. S. Pietro in Vincoli (14 July 1596); 25. Convent of the Crociferi Order (21 July 1596); 26. S. Maria in Pace (28 July 1596); 27. S. Agostino (20 January 1600). According to Pastor, the visitation commission included Cardinals Medici, Valier, and the Archbishop of Monreale, Lodovico de Torres. See Von Pastor (1933), op. cit., vol. 24, 148. It seems, however, that other cardinals were involved in the visitations of specific churches, including Cardinals Hieronymous Rusticucci, Agostino Cussano, Federico Borromeo at S. Maria Consolazione (ASV, Misc.Armadio VII, N.3, 58r), and Cardinals Mariano de Camerino, Octavio Paravincino, and Francesco Toledo at S. Maria sopra Minerva (ASV, Misc.Armadio VII, N.3, 88v).


88 Alessandro Zuccari, Arte e Committenza nella Roma di Caravaggio (Turin: ERI, 1984), 12.

89 I sincerely thank Dr. Peter Lukehart, Associate Dean at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and director of the Accademia di San Luca project, for his insightful comments on my dissertation and for sharing some of the project’s archival discoveries and information.
painter Lorenzo Sabbatini as the one who first proposed the Accademia during his sojourn in Rome. According to Malvasia, a lost letter referred to Sabbatini as the founder of the Accademia di San Luca. Sabbatini was in Florence when Vasari helped to found the Accademia del Disegno in 1563, and was a member himself beginning 1565, but no documentation survives to substantiate Malvasia’s claim. In any case, Sabbatini unfortunately died in 1576, and it was then that the initiative was taken up by Girolamo Muziano, interestingly, another North Italian native. A 1577 Bolla Apostolica of Gregory XIII acknowledged a state of decadence in the figurative arts, and the need for reform.

. . . In order to give some reasonable remedy to these drawbacks [lack of beauty, ignorance, obscurity], they think it will be best to found in Rome an Academy of the aforementioned arts, and to entrust them to qualified men, skilled in the same Arts, the office of which will procure, that the studious youths diligently come to be instructed in the Christian doctrine, in piety, in good customs, and who will together in the arts, according to intelligence, and ability in every opportune exercise, so that little by little, they set to study, and imitate the best, and most rare examples of the same Arts, so that Rome will be magnificent.

According to Baglione, it was Muziano who encouraged the Pope to do so. Although nothing materialized from this first initiative, it is worth noting that even in 1577, the

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91 Muziano was born in Brescia, a city that often fell under the authority of Lombardy, ca. 1532, and arrived in Rome in the 1550s.

92 Excerpt from Pope Gregory XIII’s Bolla Apostolica on the foundation of the Accademia di San Luca, 15 December 1577. My translation of Missirini’s citation; see Missirini, *Memorie*, 20.

93 Ibid.
purpose for the foundation of the Accademia was seen specifically as the reform of sacred imagery. Pope Gregory XIII’s Bolla Apostolica of 15 December 1577, addressed to Archbishop of Sabina and General Vicar in Rome, Cardinal Jacopo Savelli, was clear: the Accademia must obey the Sacred Canons and the Decrees of the Council of Trent.  

Pope Gregory XIII’s death in 1585 seems to have stalled, but not extinguished, the hopes of establishing the Accademia. In 1585, Romano Alberti published his *Trattato della Nobilità della Pittura*, composed in tribute to the Accademia di San Luca, Rome. Alberti reiterated many of the time-honored standards of the nobility of painting, but now cast in a Counter-Reformatory light. Alberti, indeed, took his cues from Paleotti’s *Discorso*, from which he quoted liberally throughout. He named three principal causes for the intrinsic nobility of painting and the profession of painters: First, because painting was a liberal art; second, because painting was closely connected to poetry and oratory which were already widely accepted as liberal; and third, because painting was included under many of the speculative sciences and philosophy. The first and third “causes” repeated the time-honored justification for the elevation of art from a mechanical to a liberal art through its communal foundation on intellectual principles. The second

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95 Romano Alberti, *Trattato della Nobiltà della Pittura, Composto ad istanza della venerabil Compagnia di San Luca e nobil Accademia* (Rome, 1585), in *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento, Fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, vol. 3, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1962), 197-235. The circumstances for this treatise is rather perplexing as the Accademia di San Luca had not yet been established in 1585. It may have, however, functioned as a stimulus to keep the proposal for the Accademia alive following the death of Pope Gregory XIII.

“cause,” while also fairly traditional, was posited through the lens of Paleotti’s *Discorso*. The importance given to the relationship between painting and poetry/oratory was through their shared participation in educating both the wise and learned, and the ignorant and plebian audience. Alberti seemed to refer directly to Paleotti in this vein, for he further elaborated on the three delights experienced by viewers of paintings, already mentioned in Paleotti’s *Discorso*: sensuous delight, rational delight, and supernatural or spiritual delight. According to Alberti, paintings incite sensuous delight in the viewer when they exhibit variety in colors and diversity in represented things. Rational delight, which is closely related to the former, was elicited from the viewer through the imitation of nature, whether they are men, plants, or locations. This imitation makes present those things that are past, even the dead resuscitated back to life. The final and most valued form of delight, which pertained to the supernatural or spiritual, was awakened in the soul of the viewer through devout paintings.97 Furthermore, paintings induced Christian nobility in men, for it did not produce other effects, nor serve other functions other than to raise and unite viewers to God.98 Alberti’s position on sacred painting is particularly significant in light of the fact that he would later play a crucial role as secretary of the Accademia di San Luca following its formal foundation in 1593. It is clear that Alberti was familiar with Paleotti’s *Discorso* in 1585 when he published his *Trattato*, however, he would have been put into direct contact with Cardinal Paleotti at the Accademia di San Luca in 1595.


98 Ibid., 224.
The second initiative to found the Accademia occurred in 1588 with a new Bolla Apostolica issued by Pope Sixtus V. Here, once again, the purpose of the Accademia was seen as specifically to address religious imagery: to teach piety, Christian doctrine, and correct customs to students of art. Yet, another five years would elapse before the foundation of the Accademia di San Luca was realized under the initiatives of Pope Clement VIII, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, and the painter Federico Zuccaro (ca. 1542-1609), who was named first principe of the academy. The selection of Borromeo as cardinal-protector of the Accademia is unsurprising as the love and respect for his deceased older cousin, Carlo Borromeo, still lived on in the hearts of many in the Sacred College. Carlo’s vigorous determination to implement the Tridentine decrees in his diocese of Milan, and his treatise on sacred architecture, inflected as it was with Counter-Reformatory zeal, gave him a reputation as a great and pious reformer. Federico, like

99 Alberti, Origine, 59; see also Missirini, Memorie, 23-26. Pope Sixtus’ Bolla, is reproduced in Missirini.

100 Alberti, Origine, 59.

101 Gabrieli, “Federico a Roma,” 160-61. Carlo Borromeo had established his reputation, not only in the capacity of Archbishop of Milan, but as secretary to Pope Pius IV (his uncle). The Borromeo family also had close friends and relatives within the Sacred College, including: Guido Ferreri, Bishop of Vercelli and Carlo and Federico’s cousin; Cardinal Alessandro Farnese; Cardinal Marco Altemps, also cousin of Carlo and Federico.

102 Carlo Borromeo’s 1577 treatise included a chapter on sacred painting, but the text is short, and conforms rather closely to the Council of Trent’s decree on sacred imagery. Carlo Borromeo, Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, in Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento, vol. 2, 1-123; and Evelyn Carole Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s ‘Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae,’ 1577, A Translation
his cousin (and Paleotti), also had strong ties to the two key Counter-Reformation religious congregations: the Oratorians and Jesuits. His bond with Filippo Neri and the Oratorians began immediately after his arrival in Rome in 1586. It was during his youth in Bologna (ca. 1579), however, studying under Carlo’s friend and colleague Cardinal Paleotti, that Federico forged a strong bond with the Jesuits.103 At Bologna, the young Federico participated in the Jesuits’ Congregazione della Perservanza that was held at the Studio di Bologna.104 Federico made the decision to join the Jesuit order at this time, but although accepted as a novice, Carlo intervened, having already made other plans for his young cousin and charge. Carlo wanted his younger cousin to pursue a career in the secular clergy. He thus sent Federico to the Collegio Borromeo (seminary founded by Carlo in 1564) in Pavia.105

It is unclear whether Federico’s theoretical views on sacred art were already formed at this time, for his treatise on sacred painting, *De pictura sacra*, was not published until 1624. However, it is highly probable that Federico’s appreciation for naturalism, which is apparent in his later writings, including the *De pictura sacra*, was already well established by the time he was named cardinal-protector of the Accademia. His studies in Bologna under Cardinal Paleotti, certainly provided ample opportunity for Federico to become well-versed in Paleotti’s *Discorso*, which although it was not

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103 Prodi, “Federico Borromeo,” 34.


105 See Prodi, “Federico Borromeo,” 34.
published until 1582, was already in draft form in 1579. Moreover, Borromeo had already expressed his joy in contemplating God and nature in Valier’s dialogue *Philippus sive de laetitia christiana*. His reputation as a patron and collector of art may have been justified only after his foundation of the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (ca. 1618), but Federico appears already to have begun collecting works of art during his first sojourn in Rome; works that were consonant with his appreciation of nature. It was probably at the Accademia di San Luca, that Borromeo first encountered Paul Bril, from whom he acquired numerous landscapes. During this same period, Borromeo met Jan Brueghel the Elder, who painted thirty works for the cardinal, the subjects of which focused on nature.

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106 See Chapter Two, p. 27 for the chronology of the *Discorso*.

107 Valier, *Philippvs sive*, 7: “... se leviamo gli occhi al cielo, se consideriamo la vastità e bellezza del mondo, se cogli occhi della mente la celeste Gerusalemme, ch’è la nostra patria, corriamo, se la vaghezza del sole, la varietà delle stelle, l’ordine degli elementi, sopra tutto se contempliamo la nobilissima natura dell’uomo, alla somiglianza del Re del cielo e della terra format ... .”

108 Paul Bril, the famed Flemish landscapist was a member of the Accademia di San Luca. Romano Alberti did not list Bril as one of the members of the Accademia in his 1604 *Origine*, but his list cannot be viewed as comprehensive. Although the date in which Bril entered the Accademia is unknown, his name does appear numerous times in the Accademia’s *Entrata e Uscita* beginning in 1604. See Accademia di San Luca (ASL), *Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625*, 18r, 19v, 20v, 25r, 29r, 34v, 29v, 35r, 39v, 43r. Borromeo began to acquire Bril’s works (10 landscapes in total) during the 1590s. See Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana*, 27.

109 Jan Brueghel the Elder is not known to have belonged to the Accademia di San Luca. Borromeo’s friendship and patronage of Brueghel would continue even after his return to Milan in 1595.
Federico’s love and appreciation both for nature and for paintings executed in a tangible, naturalistic style, however, may stem farther back than Bologna and Rome, to the cardinal’s origins in Milan. The region of Lombardy was steeped in the culture of naturalism, spanning from the naturalistic heritage of Leonardo’s Milanese work, which was simultaneously affective and tangible to the realistic theaters of the Sacri Monti. A recent exhibition at the Museo Diocesano, Milan, has clearly demonstrated a shared taste for Lombard “paintings of reality” which extended from Carlo Borromeo’s esteem for the Campi brothers in the 1560s and 1570s (Figs. 3, 12, 25, 33), to the success of Tanzio da Varallo (Fig. 34), and Giovanni Serodine (Fig. 35) during the late Milanese years of Federico Borromeo.\footnote{Biscottini, \textit{Carlo e Federico}; see especially Stefano Zuffi’s contribution, “Il naturalismo lombardo tra Carlo e Federico,” 189-200.} The works executed by these artists share a commonality in qualities of style: simplicity, tangibility, affectivity, and dark backgrounds or scenes. In her 1995 study on Borromeo, Pamela M. Jones provided a complete inventory of Borromeo’s collection which clearly underscore Borromeo’s taste not only for Lombard artists, but also for Lombard style and themes (such as still-lifes and landscapes).\footnote{Jones, \textit{Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana}.} Furthermore, Jones suggested that Borromeo was, indeed, trying to create a new canon of sacred art, but specifically a Milanese one. Borromeo’s admiration for Leonardo’s Milanese \textit{Last Supper}, and his reverence for Bernardino Luini in creating efficacious devotional paintings, led Jones to propose that Borromeo was clearly attempting to claim
canonical status for Milanese art.\textsuperscript{112} Certainly, Luini’s works held an elevated place in Borromeo’s artistic pantheon and in the Ambrosiana collection. One cannot, however, ignore the fact that seventy-two percent of Borromeo’s collection comprised North Italian works, from cities, that under the broadest scope, were considered a part of Lombardy. These works while not specifically Milanese were nonetheless rooted in Leonardo’s observance of the natural world and his \textit{sfumato}. One could also characterize Borromeo and his collection as bearing witness to a particular “Lombard” canonical status.

Federico’s taste for nature and Lombard naturalism thus may have come to bear upon Pope Clement VIII’s appointment of Borromeo as cardinal-protector. The precise role and function of the position of cardinal-protector is uncertain. Based upon Pope Clement VIII’s selections for the position of cardinal-protector, however, one can conclude that his choices were neither indiscriminate, nor random. Nor could the role of cardinal-protector be judged insignificant. For when Federico was appointed Archbishop of Milan in 1595, the cardinals who replaced him in this capacity were equally enthusiastic patrons and supporters of naturalism.

In 1595, Cardinals Paleotti and Francesco Maria Del Monte succeeded Borromeo as co-cardinal-protectors of the Accademia di San Luca.\textsuperscript{113} The appointment of Cardinal Paleotti seems at first unusual as he was already seventy-three years old; however, his

\textsuperscript{112} This point is most clearly stated in Pamela M. Jones, “Defining the Canonical Status of Milanese Renaissance Art: Bernardino Luini’s Paintings for the Ambrosian Accademia del Disegno,” \textit{Arte Lombarda} 100 (1992): 89-94.

\textsuperscript{113} Alberti, \textit{Origine}, dedicatory letter to Borromeo. Pope Clement VIII had also nominated both Paleotti and Del Monte as “educators of reform” at the Accademia in 1595. As in the position of “cardinal-protector,” the function of Paleotti and Del Monte as “educators of reform” is unknown.
concern for the future of sacred art had long been established with the publication of his *Discorso*. Furthermore, the Latin edition of his 1582 *Discorso (De imaginibus sacris et profanis)* had just been published in 1594. This edition, moreover, was published specifically at the instigation of Pope Clement VIII with the intention of distributing the work to a wider audience. The Pope clearly recognized the importance of Paleotti’s ideas on sacred art, and his appointment is thus unsurprising particularly in light of the fact that the Accademia was founded upon the singular objective of educating artists in the realm of sacred imagery. Paleotti, however, was not a noted patron or collector of art.

Nevertheless, his “theology of nature,” as expressed in his *Discorso*, can be visually supported by looking at the works of his favorite artist, Bartolomeo Cesi (1556-1629).

Cesi was among several other Bolognese artists, including Domenico Tibaldi and Prospero Fontana (whom Paleotti consulted when drafting his *Discorso*), Cesare Aretusi, and Camillo Procaccini, who were commissioned by Paleotti to decorate the crypt and reconstructed apse of the Cathedral of San Pietro in Bologna. Paleotti requested that Cesi and Procaccini fresco the crypt with a *Martirologio* (today almost completely lost) based

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on a similar series painted by Pomarancio in Santo Stefano Rotondo, Rome.\textsuperscript{115} Many scholars have linked the naturalistic style of Cesi to Loyola’s \textit{Spiritual Exercises}, as well as to Paleotti’s \textit{Discorso}.\textsuperscript{116} A related and equally compelling connection can be made between Cesi’s style and Lombard naturalism. Cesi’s 1597 \textit{Crucifixion} for San Gerolamo della Certosa, Bologna (Fig. 36), is similar in style, particularly in composition and sentiment, to Pulzone’s 1586 \textit{Crucifixion} for the Oratorian Chiesa Nuova (Fig. 28). Both altarpieces are simple, tangible, and affective. They mutually share timelessness and corporeal presence enhanced by a darkened sky, and nondescript setting. Cesi’s altarpiece thus followed Paleotti’s prescriptions, resulting in a Lombard brand of naturalism, where the scene and figures appear \textit{present} to the viewer. This immediacy intimately focuses one’s attention on the figures and encourages him (or her) to contemplate and meditate upon the scene. The tangibility of the image and the \textit{affetti} expressed by the figures allow the viewer to connect emotionally with what they see. The lack of particulars in setting and dark background, furthermore, provided the necessary requirements for meditative exercises; the painting resembled a mental or spiritual image.

Cardinal Del Monte, Paleotti’s counterpart at the Accademia di San Luca, was also an appropriate choice as co-cardinal-protector. Del Monte was a cultured man who loved nature, science, music, and art. Del Monte, in fact, was an avid art collector. His

\textsuperscript{115} The frescoes were to be painted from engravings by Giovan Battista Cavalieri in \textit{Ecclesiae Militantis Triumphi} (1583), a work that Paleotti also commissioned. See Fortunati, “Arte come <<Contemplazione Visiva>>>, 38-39.

\textsuperscript{116} See Benati, “Per il percorso,” 4-6; Bonfait, “Da Paleotti à G. B. Agucchi,” 85-89; and Fortunati, “Arte come <<Contemplazione Visiva>>>, 30-57.
taste for naturalistic art is evidenced by his collection, which in his 1627 inventory included nine works by the preeminent Lombard painter of naturalism, Caravaggio, whom he took into his home around the same time of his appointment at the Accademia. 117 Del Monte’s collection also included works by Leonardo da Vinci, Scipione Pulzone, the Lombard artist Antiveduto Grammatica, followers of Caravaggio, and by artists favored by Borromeo, such as Jan Brueghel the Elder and Paul Bril.118 As was the case in Borromeo’s collection, there was a preponderance of images in Del Monte’s collection that partake of the style identified here as Lombard naturalism.

Del Monte’s interests ranged from the empirical sciences to art, music, and theology. The eclectic concerns of Cardinal Del Monte are also reflected in his library. While the titles and authors of many of the books are not specified in the cardinal’s inventories, we can nevertheless identify the primary genres of works included in his collection. Waźbiński identified four main subjects for the three thousand volumes listed on the 1627 inventory: Jurisprudence, Theology, Oratory; and Comedy. In the category of Theology, the 1627 inventory included not only the expected standards, such as the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers, but also the works of the Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, and the Jesuit Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino. Waźbiński further proposed that the works of Galileo (particularly his Siderus Nuncius), and Paleotti’s Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane were likely among the unidentified volumes listed on Del


118 Ibid.; See also Waźbiński, Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte, vol. 2, 575.
Monte’s library inventory.\textsuperscript{119} All these interests of Cardinal Del Monte made him an ideal choice for the position as cardinal-protector of an Accademia that not only was founded upon the intention to reform sacred art, but that was also likely utilized as a means to guide artists to embrace a Lombard brand of naturalism for sacred style. It cannot be coincidental that in the formative years of the Accademia three North Italian figures were sequentially named as cardinal-protector, and who were intricately joined, not only socially, but through the harmony of their ideas, writings, interests, and artistic taste. In view of the fact that Borromeo, Paleotti, and Del Monte were all sympathetic to naturalism, and particularly Lombard naturalism, we cannot view their presence at the Accademia as insignificant.

Several key points need to be emphasized in order to clarify the significance of the role the Accademia di San Luca served in Counter-Reformation Rome. The Accademia di San Luca was not exceptional as a teaching institution for artists, for there were others that preceded it. There was, for instance, Lorenzo the Magnificent’s “school” or “academy” of San Marco (ca. 1490s), and the informal academies, such as that of the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli (ca. 1530s).\textsuperscript{120} The most important precedent for the Roman Accademia, however, was the Accademia del Disegno in Florence. In 1563, Cosimo I de’ Medici founded the Accademia del Disegno at the instigation of Giorgio Vasari.\textsuperscript{121} The

\textsuperscript{119} Ważbiński, Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte, vol. 2, 409-10.


\textsuperscript{121} Pevsner, Academies of Art, 42.
Roman Accademia di San Luca, however, differed significantly from its Florentine predecessor, founded as it was, principally to educate artists in the execution of sacred art.\textsuperscript{122} The Florentine Accademia, moreover, was an institution of state, and as such was “closely associated with Cosimo’s will and authority, if not with his person.”\textsuperscript{123} Cosimo was in essence the Accademia del Disegno’s \textit{principe}, and members of his court, \textit{luogotenenti} (lieutenants). The Roman Accademia di San Luca, however, was a Church-sponsored institution with cardinal-protectors, who were probably equivalent (at least symbolically) with the Florentine \textit{luogotenenti}, and an elected \textit{principe}, who was always an artist.

The lack of didactic lectures during the formative years of the Accademia del Disegno further point to a critical point of difference between the Florentine institution and the Accademia di San Luca in Rome. The delivery of only one formal lecture in Florence, the topic of which was natural philosophy (on the effect of geography and the humors on physiognomy) can be securely documented in the early 1570s, seven years after the Accademia del Disegno’s official foundation.\textsuperscript{124} It is thus significant that in the late 1570s or early 1580s, Federico Zuccaro, member of the Accademia del Disegno and future \textit{principe} of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, drafted a letter advocating the

\textsuperscript{122} See pp. 109-13 above on the origins of the Accademia di San Luca, Rome.

\textsuperscript{123} Barzman, \textit{The Florentine Academy}, 34.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 172-74.
reform of instruction at the Florentine academy.\textsuperscript{125} Zuccaro’s proposals for reform included the following additions to the curriculum: figure drawing classes, instruction on composition, and lectures in mathematics and perspective.\textsuperscript{126} There is no documentation of the curriculum of practical instruction at the Accademia del Disegno nor the Accademia di San Luca during their formative years by which we can compare the two institutions.\textsuperscript{127} We do have, however, an important record (including a schedule of lectures) of the first year of activity at the Accademia di San Luca.

Our most valuable source of information is Romano Alberti’s \textit{Origine}, which documents only the Accademia’s first year of activity (1593-1594).\textsuperscript{128} At that time, Cardinal Borromeo was the cardinal-protector, and Federico Zuccaro, the Accademia’s first \textit{principe}. It is clear from Alberti’s account that the Accademia was an ecclesiastically supported institution whose function was to address the education of artists in the execution of sacred art. It is also evident that the Accademia still retained the religious practices of the Compagnia di San Luca and the Compagnia di S. Giuseppe di

\textsuperscript{125} See Pevsner, \textit{Academies of Art}, 51; and Barzman, \textit{The Florentine Academy}, 67-68.

\textsuperscript{126} Pevsner, \textit{Academies of Art}, 51; Barzman (2000), \textit{The Florentine Academy}, 68.

\textsuperscript{127} In his letter, Zuccaro had commented that his suggestions were necessary to put the Accademia “back on its feet,” which Barzman interprets as indicating that teaching and learning had flourished during the Accademia’s formative years. See Barzman, \textit{The Florentine Academy}, 67.

\textsuperscript{128} Alberti, \textit{Origine}; According to Alberti’s “Dedication,” it was Borromeo who commissioned him to write the \textit{Origine}: “. . . che V. S. Illustissima fece di Roma per Milano al suo Arcivescovato, commise à me, come à Segretario, ben che indegno di Academia, ne tenessi minuta, a particular cura in notare tutto ciò, che passasse in giornalmente in essa Academia.”
Terrasanta (Virtuosi al Pantheon) as each meeting was preceded by Mass performed at the Accademia’s altar in Santa Martina.\textsuperscript{129} Already in the first meeting of the Accademia di San Luca on 14 November 1593, Zuccaro’s opening words further implicated the fusing of an art institution with a Counter-Reformatory climate when he invoked the name of the Most Holy Trinity, the Accademia’s advocate, S. Luke, and Sta. Martina who deigned to favor them by their intercession with God.\textsuperscript{130}

Nevertheless, much of Alberti’s record contradicted a pious objective on the part of Zuccaro and the Accademia. Alberti’s \textit{Origine} clearly inflected Zuccaro’s lofty theoretical ideas, and the author does not bother to hide his sympathy for them. Zuccaro’s theoretical views, in fact, seem contradictory to those of Borromeo, in his lack of sympathy for imitating nature, both in theory and practice. Zuccaro’s emphasis on \textit{disegno interno} was certainly antithetical to the practice of observing the natural world. There is only one aspect of Zuccaro’s thought, in fact, that closely links him with Borromeo. The basis of this similarity between the first cardinal-protector and \textit{principe


\textsuperscript{130} Alberti, \textit{Origine}, 2-3.
centered on Zuccaro’s definition of *disegno* as *il segno di Dio* (*di-segn-o*). Here, Zuccaro pointedly linked the creations of the artist to the divine creation of God, specifically man and the natural world. Yet, distinct from Paleotti’s characterization of the artist’s ability to paint nature (God’s creation) as one of privilege, Zuccaro cast the relationship between artist-creator and God the Divine Creator as one of equal correspondence. For Zuccaro, a painting was lacking if it was solely based on the imitation of nature and eschewed all the concepts, all the artificial powers, and the intellectual imagination of the artist. This was not merely a pompous point of view, but an intellectualizing one at that. It encompassed two key aspects (artifice and intellect) of *maniera* ideology and practice that had drawn criticism and sparked the indignation of the Council of Trent and Post-Trent theorists against the *maniera* style. In essence, Zuccaro’s conceptualization of the artist marked a return or preservation of the Vasarian and *maniera* point of view.

Denis Mahon had long ago pointed to the theoretical disputes that occurred at the Accademia under Zuccaro’s leadership. There were those at the Accademia who were not as single-minded as Zuccaro in his quest to deify the artist. Cristofano Roncalli (Il

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133 Ibid., 17-18.

Pomarancio), for instance, delivered a lecture on history painting on 26 June 1594 that was well received by his fellow members. Mahon concluded that,

Roncalli’s method of approach was radically different from that of his president, and he is obviously quite uninfluenced by the latter. He virtually gives us a practical account of how an artist sets about a history painting. There are no abstract metaphysics: ‘idea’ means quite simply the rough mental image of a composition before the artist starts his drawing.¹³⁵

Roncalli addressed the Accademia not only in plain language, but his discourse touched upon points consonant with Counter-Reformation rhetoric. According to Roncalli, when creating a history painting, the painter must not:

- make it confusing, and while one does not want to make it confusing, do not make it poor, or lacking . . . the movements, and attitudes must be appropriate to the ages, to the sexes, to the dignities, to the levels, and to other qualities [of the person]; [they] should not be too violent, or forced, not too disorderly, or relaxed, but pleasant, sweet, and proportioned to that and to who you are making; to the time, to the place, and to the level . . . that all the bodies make [movements] belonging to the action represented, and above all as much as one can, reveal the affect of the spirit . . . . ¹³⁶

Roncalli’s guidelines for history painting reiterated the very same maniera qualities that were deemed problematic by Gilio and Paleotti. Moreover, Roncalli underscored the critical Counter-Reformatory point that paintings must reveal the emotions of the figure’s spirit. For without this last quality, paintings cannot, in turn, emotionally or spiritually move the emotions of viewers. Roncalli’s position, contrary as it was to Zuccaro’s, could


¹³⁶ Alberti, *Origine*, 69: “. . . no[n] si faccia co[n]fusa, e me[n]tre no[n] si vol far confuse, no[n] si faccia povera, e mancante . . . che li movimenti, e l’attitudine sino convenienti all’etade, à i sessi, alle dignita di, à i gradi, & all’altra qualita di, non siano troppo violenti, e forzati, non troppo rimessi, ò lenti, ma gratiosi, dolci, e proportionate à quello che si fà, à chi si fà, al tempo, al luogo, & al grado . . . . che i corpi tutti facciano qualche cosa appartine[n]te all’attione rappresentata, e sopra tutto quanto più si può scoprino l’affetto dell’animo . . . .”
not have been isolated. The frustration with Zuccaro’s ideology seems to have prompted many speakers to bow out of their scheduled lectures during the 1593-94 academic year.\textsuperscript{137}

The topics of the scheduled lectures, however, despite the aforementioned cancellations, are indicative of the differences between the function of the Accademia del Disegno as a political entity of the Medicean grand-duchy, versus the Accademia di San Luca’s association with the Church. In addition to the traditional lectures on disegno, beauty, perspective, and anatomy, other topics painting included how to portray the affetti, decorum, spirit and liveliness in painting, the power of relief, morbidezza (fleshiness), and the accurate imitation of truth and how it forms the real substance of good painting.\textsuperscript{138} This latter group of lecture topics is particularly significant as they were not only worlds away from Zuccaro’s lofty disegno interno/disegno esterno hobby horse, but they were also topics relevant to the Council of Trent’s decree on images (1563) and the style of Lombard naturalism.

In 1990 Marcello Beltramme, taking his cues from Mahon, proposed that the theoretical debates not only stemmed from the members’ dissatisfaction and

\textsuperscript{137} Giacomo della Porta was scheduled to speak on architecture at the sixth meeting (26 January 1594, but sent word on that day that he had too many other obligations). His lecture was rescheduled for the next meeting (3 February 1594), but once again Della Porta did not appear to deliver his lecture, as was the case for the following meeting on 11 February. Giuseppe d’Arpino (Cavaliere d’Arpino) was on the calendar to speak on 6 March 1594, but he too sent his apologies to the Accademia and had his friend Camillo Ducci to speak on his behalf. G. B. Ricci da Novara was to speak on the beauty of the figure at the twelfth meeting (13 March 1594), but failed to appear. See Alberti, \textit{Origine}, 26, 30, 34, 57-58.

\textsuperscript{138} Alberti, \textit{Origine}, 53-56.
bewilderment with Zuccaro’s intellectualizing discourses, but that after the end of his tenure, significant changes were made to the pedagogical program. Beltramme credited this shift to the appointment of Paleotti as cardinal-protector in 1595. Beginning with the election of Zuccaro’s successor, Tommaso Laureti, on 1 October 1594 the Accademia appears to have slowly returned to a foundation based primarily on religious, rather than secular, concerns. Immediately after the departure of Zuccaro, Laureti proposed a revision of the original statutes of the Accademia. These reforms included limiting the power wielded by the elected *principe*. The changes to the statutes continued for several years, but Beltramme believed that the dismantling of Zuccaro’s sphere of influence began under the cardinal-protectors Paleotti and Del Monte. He asserted that Paleotti’s presence at the Accademia and the publication of the Latin edition of his *Discorso* in 1594, particularly affected the direction of the Accademia. It appears, however, that it was not in the scope of his article to analyze the language and meaning of Paleotti’s text, nor provide a comprehensive examination of the relationship between the *Discorso* and the style of key members of the Accademia. Yet, the discerning selection of Zuccaro’s successors, Laureti (1594-1595), Giovanni de’ Vecchi (1595-1596), Cesare Nebbia (1596-1597), and especially Durante Alberti (1597-1598) cannot be

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140 Ibid. 206.

141 Ibid.

142 This aspect will primarily be the subject of Chapter 6.
underestimated. The styles of these artists could not have been further removed from Zuccaro’s own (Fig. 37).

Tommaso Laureti (ca. 1530-1602) was born in Sicily, and worked in Bologna from ca. 1563-82, the very same years that Cardinal Paleotti was there working on his Discorso. While his knowledge of Paleotti’s treatise at this early period cannot be determined, it can be said that the formative years Laureti spent in Bologna certainly had a profound effect on him. His style can be characterized as sober, simple, mathematical, and free of the overt and problematic qualities that typify works of the maniera. His arrival in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Gregory XIII resulted in the papal commission in the Vatican Palace. Laureti’s style is exemplified in the Triumph of Christianity (Fig. 38, Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace), whose subject proclaimed not only the Post-Tridentine Church’s resolute stand against paganism and the triumph of Christianity, but also validated sacred imagery through the fresco’s equally strong indictment of the iconoclastic outbreaks in Protestant countries. Laureti’s fresco in the vault of the Sala di Costantino asserted the primacy of images and the rejection of paganism (and negation of idolatry). Here, the statue of Mercury has been toppled over from its high pedestal and shattered on the marble floor of a classically inspired room, and a large crucifix triumphantly stands in its former place of honor. Laureti’s ordered

143 The vault fresco was only one of several initiatives undertaken by Pope Sixtus V to “Christianize” Rome. The gilt ball atop the obelisk adjacent to St. Peter’s (once believed to have contained the ashes of Julius Caesar) was replaced with a bronze cross. Under the direction of Domenico Fontana, the obelisk itself was also moved to the center of the piazza in front of St. Peter’s, which at the time was still under construction. Pope Sixtus V also replaced the statues of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius atop their respective columns, with those of St. Peter and St. Paul. 129
simplistic style, and particularly, the toppled idol of Mercury, would have met with the
approval of Cardinal Paleotti, who did not shy away from expressing his aversion to
pagan art (especially nude Classical sculptures) in his Discorso.

Giovanni de’ Vecchi (1536-1614) enjoyed the patronage of Cardinal Alessandro
Farnese, and contributed to the final phase of the decoration of the Farnese Villa at
Caprarola. He was among the artists (including Scipione Pulzone, and El Greco) at the
Farnese court, which Federico Zeri identified as a critical center for sacred art reform; an
atmosphere nurtured on Gilio’s regola mescolanza and the formulation of “an art without
time” (arte senza tempo).144 His style has been described by Marcia Hall as “a
concatenation of realism and mysticism”,145 evident in his ca. 1574 fresco of the
Miraculous Communion of Saint Catherine of Siena (Fig. 39) in the Capranica Chapel,
Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, Rome. The fresco conveys a quiet spirituality combined with
both a physical and psychological tangibility. As Hall observed, the miracle does not
occur in an abstract celestial sphere, but is grounded on earth and in the present. A
similar effect can be seen in De’ Vecchi’s Procession of the Madonna dell’Aracoeli (Fig.
40, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome), which Zeri described as a work that applied Gilio’s
regola mescolanza. Interestingly, Zeri interpreted the composition as a reprise of a model
distantly originating from Lombardy and the Quattrocento.146 In a similar manner, De’

144 Zeri, Pittura e Controriforma, 40-42.

145 Marcia Hall, After Raphael, Painting in Central Italy in the Sixteenth Century
(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 212.

146 Zeri, Pittura e Controriforma, 50.
Vecchi’s *Christ Carrying the Cross* (Fig. 41, Galleria Borghese, Rome) displays a combination of Quattrocento piety, and the tangibility and timelessness of the Lombard School. The characteristic Lombard dark background pushes the figure of Christ and the grieving Virgin toward the viewer; as its size suggests it functioned as a private, devotional work. Christ displays his suffering, not in blood, but in expression and gesture, while the Virgin is older, unidealized and sheds visible tears. De’ Vecchi’s style allows everyday viewers to connect physically, emotionally, and psychologically with the image, an effect so critical for Paleotti’s prescriptions for sacred art. The consonance of the *principe’s* and cardinal-protector’s ideas on the nobility of the painter’s profession is confirmed by an excerpt from De’ Vecchi’s new statutes of 1596:

> The excellence of this Academy does need not be expressed with words, having discovered somewhat clearly its aim, that is, of nobly elevating [these] professions, which being imitators of natural things, not only expressing and emulating the artifices of the same God, but they delight marvelously, being that our souls are inclined toward the imitation of nature, and to the harmony, which more happily is not discovered in the tones, and in the semitones, than in the variety, and in the disposition of those colors that the painting represents.  

Cesare Nebbia (ca. 1536-1614) trained and worked with Girolamo Muziano, who coincidentally, was the artist credited with successfully convincing Pope Gregory XIII of the urgent need to found the Accademia di San Luca in Rome in 1577. The work Nebbia executed, in collaboration with Giovanni Guerra, for the Scala Santa, Rome (Fig. 42) in 1580 is:

> Missirini, *Memorie*, 69-70: “L’eccellenza di questa Accademia non ha bisogno di essere illustrate con parole, scoprendosi assai chiaramente dal fine, di alimentare cioè nobilmente professioni, le quali essendo imitatrix delle cose naturali, non solamente vanno esprimendo, ed emulando gli artifici dello stesso Iddio, ma ne dilettano maravigliosamente, essendo gli animi nostril inclinati per natura all’imitazione, e all’armonia, la quale non più felicemente si scopre nei toni, e nei semitone, che nella varietà, e nella disposizione di quei colori, che ci rappresenta la Pittura.”
the late 1580s epitomized the new reforming spirit of art that began under Pope Sixtus V, a style that was both didactic and affective. There is an appropriate absence of maniera conventions to distract the viewer from the action of the narrative. Viewers are confronted instead with a historical and affective truth intended to incite their devotion as they scaled the steps on their knees.

Durante dal Borgo (1558-1613, also known as Durante Alberti, uncle of Romano Alberti), the fifth principe (or capo),\(^\text{148}\) executed paintings not only for his Congregation, but also for the Oratorians.\(^\text{149}\) In addition to working for these two key religious congregations, his early biographer Giovanni Baglione had also attested to Alberti’s devout spirituality.\(^\text{150}\) Durante’s style was one of extreme spirituality and simplicity. His ca. 1580s Adoration of the Shepherds (Fig. 43) for the Cappella della Natività, a chapel funded by the Oratorian Cardinal Antoniano in the Chiesa Nuova has been described by Alessandro Zuccari as the embodiment of the Oratorian “pauperistic sensibility.”\(^\text{151}\)

\(^{148}\) Alberti, *Origine*, 79; Unlike the case for Zuccaro, Laureti, De’ Vecchi, and Nebbia, Romano Alberti’s refers to Durante dal Borgo not as principe, but capo. Mahon suggested that the title had finally been changed. See Mahon, *Studies in Seicento*, 174, n. 46.

\(^{149}\) Other artists who worked for both the Jesuits and the Oratorians include Girolamo Muziano, Scipione Pulzone, Andrea Lilio, Cavaliere d’Arpino, Paul Bril, Peter Paul Rubens, and the sculptor Flaminio Vacca. The latter served as principe of the Accademia di San Luca 1598-1599 succeeding Durante dal Borgo.

\(^{150}\) Baglione, *Vite*, 118-19: “Fu dal Borgo s. Sepolcro Durante Alberti, uomo d’honore, e devotissimo Christiano, si come le sue pitture il fanno manifesto, che oltre la bontà propria, recano a tutti mirabile devotione . . . Quest’huomo honorato, e da bene fu molto religioso; e della pietà Christiana, e della virtù insieme amatore.”

\(^{151}\) Zuccari, “Cultura e predicazione,” 346.
These are not figures estranged from the earthly world, resplendent and beautiful, but are presented as everyday humble and poor people with dirty and bare feet. The lamb in the mid-foreground, while symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice, is another instance of Durante’s penchant for realistic detail. His relationship with the Jesuits seems to have been close, as it was at his request that a Jesuit father was asked to speak to the Accademia di San Luca, a first in the short history of the institution. His appointment to capo of the Accademia, therefore, cannot but be deemed significant.

It seems unquestionable that the selection of Paleotti as cardinal-protector of the Accademia in 1595 was likewise purposeful, and it is my contention that his Discorso was utilized to contribute (and fulfill) the Accademia’s objective to educate artists in the execution of sacred art. Moreover, it seems, that after the departure of Zuccaro, and the arrival of Paleotti at the Accademia di San Luca, the position of principe or capo went to artists whose styles embraced Paleotti’s “theology of nature.” If the appointment of the cardinal-protector and its principe were determined upon objectives of education and reformation of sacred images based on naturalism, then might one also extend the same basis for the selection of artists commissioned to execute sacred images during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII. This aspect will be the subject of Chapter Six.

In the last two decades of the Cinquecento there is a meeting of the minds in Rome, a confluence of thought, which together not only validated sacred imagery, but underscored naturalism as the *linguaggio commune* to reach the general populace. Cardinal Paleotti’s close association with Pope Clement VIII, who, moreover, urged Paleotti to draft a Latin edition of his *Discorso*, his significant relationship, both social and theoretical, with the Oratorians and Jesuits, and his role as cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca represent the fertile new soil that was cultivated and nurtured on Paleotti’s rhetoric. It was in Rome during the last two decades of the Cinquecento that the various threads of Counter-Reformation life – theory, affective sermons, spiritual exercises, tangible art – were interlaced into an unbreakable and mutually supporting framework that symbolically declared Paleotti’s “theology of nature,” realized in painting of Lombard naturalism, the new canon for sacred art.
CHAPTER 5  
SCALING THE LADDER TO THE DIVINE: THE APPLICATION OF PALEOTTI’S CANON IN CARAVAGGIO AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Pope Clement VIII’s interest in art has in the past been described as negligible.\(^1\) This is a fair statement considering that Pope Clement VIII initiated few large-scale artistic projects, particularly in comparison to his near predecessors Pope Gregory XIII and Pope Sixtus V. Yet what Pope Clement VIII accomplished in other artistic initiatives was decisive in shaping the future of sacred art. His legacy rests not on the quantity of his artistic initiatives, but rather on the effective means he adopted to change the direction of religious art by supporting and promulgating Paleotti’s prescriptions for sacred style. The publication of the Latin edition of Paleotti’s *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (1594) and his appointment as cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca (1595) occurred within a single year, and at a time when rapid preparations were being made for the Jubilee of 1600. It was thus not only imperative that the splendor of Rome rise triumphant amidst Protestant discontent, but also that the decorations of chapels and churches be appropriate such that they engage, both spiritually and emotionally, the thousands of devout Christians who would soon swarm the Eternal City. In light of these converging objectives, Paleotti’s presence and role at the Accademia di San Luca at this critical time cannot be viewed as arbitrary. The Accademia, after all, was intended to educate artists in the execution of sacred art. The major artistic projects during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII, in fact, would utilize primarily members of the Accademia. Moreover, many of the key renovations and decorations of chapels and

\(^1\) Abromson, *Painting in Rome*, 34.
churches in Rome were initiated by cardinals that were close to the Pope, the Oratorians, and the Jesuits. Most of these cardinals would also seek members of the Accademia to execute their projects. It is in this complex and highly charged climate of pre-Jubilee Rome, that Lombard naturalism would make its presence felt in the altarpieces and chapel decorations by painters from the Accademia. The key artist who would fulfill Paleotti’s “theology of nature,” and who would play a decisive role in the dissemination of sacred art based on the tangible and present, would significantly in fact be a Lombard - Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610).

The Lombard Denominator in Roman Post-Tridentine Art: The Reforms of Scipione Pulzone and Annibale Carracci

The question whether there was in fact a Counter-Reformation or Post-Tridentine sacred style has long been a topic of debate among scholars. Scholars also have endeavored to connect a particular style to the art produced after the closing of the Council of Trent. Federico Zeri, in his book entitled *Pittura e Controriforma* (1957), proposed that a Counter-Reformatory style of sacred imagery emerged in the work of Scipione Pulzone.\(^2\) Pulzone’s sacred style, according to Zeri, perfectly fulfilled Gilio’s *regola mescolanza* by harmoniously melding naturalism with a timeless piety (*arte senza tempo*). Pulzone’s life-like portraits (Fig. 44), in fact, had been admired by his contemporaries, including Borghini,\(^3\) Lomazzo,\(^4\) and Baglione.\(^5\) In his 1642 biography of

\(^2\) Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma*, 50.


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the artist, Baglione described Pulzone’s portraits as “seeming as true to the original,” and so “lively” that one cannot distinguish the portrait from the original. The dark backgrounds combined with the minute detail, equally in the sitter and other accoutrements, employed in Pulzone’s portraits, were characteristics that Zeri related to Flemish precedents, such as Jan Van Eyck. The Flemish attributions are certainly valid, but these characteristics also abound in the work of Lombard artists, such as Leonardo (Figs. 19, 20), Savoldo (Fig. 21), and others. Such Flemish models, too, likely influenced Leonardo. The phenomenon of Leonardo’s naturalism and his reputation as an exemplary artist had, however, widely broadened and accelerated the adaptation of his style throughout Lombardy, to such an extent that one cannot preclude the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that it was Lombard models from which Pulzone drew his inspiration.

Baglione further observed that Pulzone was equally accomplished in painting *historie*, such as his altarpiece of the *Assumption of the Virgin* (Fig. 45) in which one

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5 Baglione, *Vite*.

6 Ibid., 53: “... e si vivi li faceva, e con tal diligenza, che vi si farieno contatti fin tutti i capelli, & in particolare li drappi, che in quelli ritraheva, parevano del loro originale più very, e davano mirabil gusto. Fu egli tanto accurate, che nel ritratto di Ferdinando all’hora Cardinal de’ Medici vedeasi in fin dentro alla piccolo papilla degli occhi il riflesso delle finestre vetriate della camera, & alter cose degne come di maraviglia, così di memoria. Et i vivi da’ suoi dipinti non si distinguevano.”
could find life-like portraits, diverse attitudes and lively color. Vasari made the same observations in the work of Leonardo, Correggio, and others; qualities which, in Vasari’s assessment, identified artists as “Lombard.” The similarities between Pulzone’s Lamentation (Fig. 46, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) for the church of Il Gesù and Correggio’s painting of the same subject (Fig. 47, Galleria Nazionale, Parma) underscore the Lombard correlation. The compositions in both paintings share a remarkable similarity. In both Pulzone’s and Correggio’s composition, the figures are distributed across the frontal plane, in such close proximity to the viewer that some of the figures and even the cross are truncated at the edges and at the top. Both artists render their figures naturalistically, sharing a similar sfumatesque handling of the bodies (particularly in the body of Christ), and in the display of the protagonists’ affetti through their diverse gestures and expressions. The nondescript and dark tonalities of the settings render the timeless quality Zeri observed, which at the same time, enhance the presence of the figures. The contrast of the dark settings and strong light not only contribute to the rilievo and proximity of the figures, but also to the vibrancy of the colors in the drapery. The juxtaposition of dark shadows and forceful light makes the colors appear natural, giving the impression that pure colors were employed, untempered and without any manipulation. This negates any “artificiality” on the artist’s part, which only further emphasizes the “naturalness” of the scenes.

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Baglione, Vite, 53-54; Pulzone’s Assumption of the Virgin in S. Silvestro al Quirinale, Rome was in fact the work on which Cardinal Paleotti served as consultant. See Chapter 4, p. 84.
Pulzone’s *Crucifixion* (Fig. 28) for Santa Maria della Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova), Rome, further points to Lombard influences. The austerity of the scene is emphasized by the plain, tenebrist background, focusing the viewers’ attention on Christ on the Cross, the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene. Pulzone captured the *affetti* of each of the protagonists through their gestures and expressions: the Virgin’s sorrow, Mary Magdalene’s painful despair, and St. John the Evangelist’s disbelief. The dark setting and strong light push them forward in close proximity to the viewer, achieving an effect similar to Leonardo’s single figure compositions such as *St. John the Baptist* (Fig. 22), and Luini’s close-up narratives (Fig. 48). Furthermore, the contrast of light and shadow enhances the vibrancy of the colors in their draperies, and the flesh of their skin. The immediacy and *presence* of the figures emotionally position the viewer in a shared time and space.

The qualities of simplicity, immediacy, tangibility, and affectivity present in Pulzone’s style are compatible to Paleotti’s prescriptions for sacred art. Zeri had suggested that Pulzone had read and/or discussed Gilio’s *Degli errori* at the Farnese court. Yet, it is equally, if not more, possible that Pulzone was acquainted with both Gilio’s *Degli errori* and Paleotti and his *Discorso*. Prodi has provided evidence of a relationship between Pulzone and Paleotti through published letters between Silvio Antoniano and Cardinal Paleotti in regards to Pulzone’s *Assumption of the Virgin* for S. Silvestro al Quirinale.⁸ Pulzone also would have had the opportunity to encounter Paleotti

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at the Accademia di San Luca, where he was a member. Pulzone’s sacred style thus was nurtured not only by the Counter-Reformatory environment surrounding the Oratorians and Jesuits, for whom he had worked, but also by two theorists who advocated naturalism in sacred painting in order to reach the popolo.

Other scholars have ascribed the new Counter-Reformation style to the Carracci of Bologna. The naturalism advocated by the Carracci, and evidenced through their work, has often been linked to Paleotti’s Discorso and its directives for a truthful representation of sacred scenes based on Scripture and nature. Prodi suggested that the naturalism promoted in Paleotti’s treatise was an integral factor in the resurgence of naturalism in sacred imagery, and for the development of the Carracci’s own reform of painting. A. W. A. Boschloo, who saw in Paleotti’s Discorso and the work of the Carracci a shared vision in “visible reality,” espouses a similar view. The theoretical connection between

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9 Scipione Pulzone was not listed among the members of the Accademia di San Luca in Romano Alberti’s Origine. The omission of his name, however, does not preclude the likelihood that he was a member as Alberti’s list was not comprehensive. See Alberti, Origine, “Pitori Academicì che di mano in mano si sottoscrissero di loro proprio mano, & altri.” Furthermore, in his Life of Federico Zuccaro, Baglione mentioned that Federico, principe of the Accademia, had asked Scipione Pulzone to restore the painting by Raphael (this attribution is a myth) of S. Luke. Baglione referred to Pulzone as “Accademico valent’huomo.” See Baglione, Vite, 124: “Federico fu zelante della reputazione de’suoi maggiori, & in particolare di Raffaello Santio da Urbino suo paesano; poiche venne il caso, che il quadro di s. Luca di mano di Raffaello, e da esso donato a cotesto luogo, per alcuni patimenti fu dato ad accomodare a Scipione da Gaeta, Accademico valent’huomo . . . .” For an analysis on the mythic construction of the painting’s attribution to Raphael, see Zygmunt Waźbiński, “San Luca che dipinge la Madonna all’Accademica di Roma: un ‘pastiche’ zuccariano nella maniera di Raffaello?,” Artibus et Historiae 6 (1985): 27-37.


Paleotti and the Carracci, while being a legitimate course of inquiry, cannot be substantiated. Agostino Carracci (1557-1619) had dedicated an engraving of the *Adoration of the Magi* in 1579, and a map of Bologna in 1581 to the cardinal, but there is no evidence that either he, or his brother Annibale (1560-1609) or his cousin Ludovico (1555-1619), had read the *Discorso*.\(^\text{12}\) It is equally significant that the Carracci do not number among the documented artists whom Paleotti consulted while writing his treatise.\(^\text{13}\) The appropriateness of classical art as models for sacred figures and scenes would likely have been a further point of contention between the Cardinal and the Carracci, particularly Annibale. Paleotti’s unrelenting antipathy for pagan art (even the idea of collecting such objects annoyed him), would have collided with Annibale’s classical sensibilities. There can be no denying, nevertheless, Annibale’s proclivity for infusing his classical compositions and figures with the naturalism so appreciated by Paleotti.

Annibale’s brand of naturalism has been considered quite distinct from Caravaggio and Lombard painters in general. It can certainly be said that Caravaggio did not share the classicizing sensibilities of Annibale, either in theory or practice. The intentions of both artists, however, are essentially the same.\(^\text{14}\) Naturalism was the

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\(^{13}\) The artists Paleotti consulted include: the painters, Prospero Fontana, and Domenico Tibaldi, and the antiquarian/decorator, Pirro Ligorio; Prodi, “Ricerche sulla teorica,” 144-45.

\(^{14}\) Charles Dempsey has addressed the issue of alternative naturalist styles in Charles Dempsey, “Caravaggio and the Two Naturalistic Styles: Specular and Macular,”
foundation in the works of both artists, albeit in different degrees. Both were motivated to move toward a more truthful representation of the natural world, shifting away from the artificiality of *maniera* art. Annibale’s early work, moreover, betrays closer and undeniable Lombard inflections in both subject and stylistic qualities. Annibale had traveled to Venice and Lombardy, in fact, with his brother Agostino around 1580. The work he executed after his return to Bologna in 1582 demonstrates the effect of his travels and studies in Lombardy. Annibale’s *Large Butcher’s Shop* (Fig. 49, Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford) and the *Bean Eater* (Fig. 50, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan) exemplify the Lombard interest in mundane genre scenes and uncompromising naturalism in the tradition of the Campi (Figs. 12, 51). The 1583 *Crucifixion* (Fig. 52) for Santa Maria della Carità, Bologna, exhibits Annibale’s adoption of the rich and loose application of paint of the Venetians, but more importantly, a Lombard interest in dramatic effects of light and shadow that contributes to the convincing naturalism and tangibility of the scene. The figures are placed along the frontal plane, and their *affetti* are beautifully and effectively conveyed through gestures and facial expressions. The otherworldly glow surrounding the body of Christ is undermined by the overt naturalism of his body: the unidealized portrayal of the protagonists below, and especially the dirty, bare feet of St. Francis (Fig. 53). It is not the plebian, dark cellars of Caravaggio’s later Roman altarpieces, yet their inspirations both had their source in Lombardy.

It is quite easy to see differences between the styles of artists, but it is much more difficult to recognize similarities, particularly between Annibale and Caravaggio. In

Baglione’s 1603 libel suit against Caravaggio, Caravaggio had, in fact, named Annibale among those he considered *valenthuomini*; those “who know how to practice his art well . . . how to paint well and to imitate natural things.” In Vincenzo Giustiniani’s famous letter to Teodoro Ameyden (ca. 1620), the marchese grouped Annibale and Caravaggio together among artists who practiced the twelfth and highest mode of painting.

The twelfth method is the most perfect of all since it is the rarest and most difficult. It is the union of the tenth with the eleventh method, that is to say, to paint *di maniera* and also directly from life. In our time, this is the way that Caravaggio, the Carracci, Guido Reni, and other world-famous painters of the highest rank painted. Some of them were inclined more toward nature than the *maniera* and some more toward the *maniera* than toward nature, without however abandoning either method, and emphasizing good design, true colors, and appropriate realistic lighting. The artists cited by Giustiniani all painted from the example of nature, yet the marchese clearly discerned that those who practiced this twelfth mode utilized different degrees of naturalism. Nevertheless, according to Giustiniani, each one of these artists not only employed good design, but “true color” and “proper and true light.”

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Annibale’s style: “In regard to color, he endeavored to express its rarest beauty. Having
pursued that goal, he proposed on his arrival in Rome, to unite the mastery of design of
the Roman School with the beauty of color of the Lombard.” It is the distinctive
handling of color, and by extension, light and shadow, which are the determining
indicators of Lombard style. Giustiniani’s and Agucchi’s comments are intricately
connected to Vasari’s descriptions of the “carnal fleshiness,” “naturalistic color,” and
“liveliness” in the work of Lombard artists.

Similar correlations can be made between Lombard style and Annibale’s work
executed after his arrival in Rome in 1595. In Baglione’s Life of Annibale, he indicated
that the St. Margaret (identified as St. Catherine by Baglione) for Santa Caterina dei
Funari, Rome (Fig. 54) was painted “in imitation of Correggio.” The classicizing figure
of St. Margaret is reminiscent of Raphael’s own portrayals of saints, particularly, St.
Catherine (Fig. 55, National Gallery of Art, London). The lush landscape and strong
chiaroscuro in Annibale’s canvas, however, summons inspiration both from Correggio
and from Lombard artists in general, particularly Leonardo (Fig. 11). Annibale created a
tangible presence by employing the potent Lombard contrast of light and shadow, in
order to give the figure a natural morbidezza and to enhance the vitality and purity of the
colors in the saint’s robes. It is this very work in Santa Caterina dei Funari, which Bellori
claimed had elicited great praise from the young Caravaggio. According to Bellori,
Caravaggio examined Annibale’s St. Margaret for a long time and exclaimed: “I am glad

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17 Enggass and Brown, Italian and Spanish Art, 30.

18 Baglione, Vite, 106.
at last to see a true painter in my lifetime.”19 It is significant that even Bellori, the preeminent classicist, interpreted Caravaggio’s comment as meaning “the good naturalistic style which had completely died out in Rome and in other parts as well.”20 In several of Annibale’s Roman private commissions the Lombard influences are even more acutely evident. Annibale’s ca. 1598 Pietà (Fig. 56, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples), for Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, and the contemporary Crowning of Thorns (Fig. 57, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna), both share intensification in the contrast of light and shadow. The tenebrism of the setting and the sfumatesque handling of the bodies enrich the intensity of the light and the vibrancy of the colors. The profound expression of the affetti and the close proximity of the figures to the frontal plane, further underscore the effect of natural and tangible presences.

The Carracci reform of painting may have been formulated independent of Paleotti’s theoretical position, but there still remains the possibility that the Archbishop of Bologna’s ideas were filtered through the climate of the city, and to the ears of artists. By 1582, the date in which Paleotti’s Discorso was published and the Carracci Accademia dei Desiderosi (later Incaminati) was founded, the crisis of the maniera style had reached a critical juncture. The publication of the decrees of the Council of Trent and Gilio’s Degli errori, in 1563 and 1564 respectively, had already signaled that a solution

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to the deficiencies of the predominating Central-Italian *maniera* style in sacred imagery needed to be found. By the 1570s, Santi di Tito had already inaugurated his own reform of sacred painting in Florence. Santi had made an important trip to Venice in 1571-72, and consequently, the Venetian inflections in his work have often been remarked upon. In Santi’s 1593 *Vision of St. Thomas Aquinas* for the church of San Marco, Florence (Fig. 58), for example, the asymmetrical spatial composition derives from Venetian precedents, particularly in the work of Titian. Strong Lombard qualities, however, are also apparent in the realism of the figures, the genuine religious sentiment of the figures’ *affetti*, and the bold contrast of light and shadow. The Lombard style also had a powerful presence in Venice, particularly in the works of Giorgione and Savoldo.

Ludovico and Annibale Carracci’s trip to Venice and Lombardy would similarly be inflected in their own later works and teaching. In Rome, however, Annibale would work for cardinal-patrons, such as Odoardo Farnese and Pietro Aldobrandini, both of whom were close not only to the papal court, but also to the Oratorians and the Jesuits. Moreover, Annibale may have had the opportunity to come into direct contact with Cardinal Paleotti and his *Discorso* at the Accademia di San Luca, though his participation there is not substantively documented.²¹ Annibale’s brand of naturalism ventured beyond the limits of a simple truth to nature, but it was infused with a classical sensibility and

tenor that distanced it from the realm of the every day. Nevertheless, Lombard naturalism had made its way into Post-Tridentine Roman altarpieces and paintings long before the arrival of Caravaggio in Rome ca. 1592. It would be Caravaggio’s public debut at San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, however, that would profoundly hasten and increase the adoption of Lombard naturalism by artists from all over Europe for decades to come.

The Question of Caravaggio and Counter-Reformation Style:
Caravaggio’s Public Roman Works

Caravaggio, Lombard by birth and training, has received much attention within the last century in the context of Counter-Reformation culture and style. In placing Caravaggio within the ambient of Counter-Reformation Rome, Walter Friedlaender proposed that Caravaggio’s religious paintings had a particular affinity with the mysticism of St. Filippo Neri and the Oratorians, and the meditative practices of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises.* Howard Hibbard rejected Friedlaender’s suggestion of a direct Caravaggio-Oratorian-Jesuit correlation, but rather favored an Augustinian influence in the notion of “grace” and “conversion.” Other scholars, including Maurizio Calvesi and Joseph Chorpenning, contended that the religious climate of Rome in totality introduced Counter-Reformatory principles into the work and

22 Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies.*

23 Hibbard, *Caravaggio.*

24 Calvesi, *La realtà del Caravaggio.*

style of Caravaggio. The significance of Caravaggio’s tenebrism has been a point of particular interest in scholarship. Pamela Askew proposed that Caravaggio’s light and shadow functioned as a vehicle for meditation by freezing the action, focusing the viewer’s attention on the protagonists’ conversion or spiritual enlightenment.\textsuperscript{26} John Moffitt put forward a similar interpretation in his 2004 book entitled \textit{Caravaggio in Context}. Moffitt suggested that the coincidence of the developments in empirical science and the renewed interest in the metaphorical significance of light and shadow formed the basis of Caravaggio’s style.\textsuperscript{27} Shadows were the opposition to light as “lux divina,” which Moffitt traced to both religious and humanistic literature. This opposition, according to Moffitt, facilitated the theological expression of conversion and spiritual enlightenment in Caravaggio’s religious paintings.\textsuperscript{28} Janis Bell trains her focus on the artistic significance of Caravaggio’s color, rather than the metaphorical function of light and shadow.\textsuperscript{29} All these facets of Caravaggio scholarship, however, converge in the consideration of the rebellious artist’s place in Paleotti’s reformulation of sacred art. Caravaggio’s quotidian sacred style, in fact, most fully realized Paleotti’s vision in making Lombard naturalism the new paradigm for sacred painting.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Moffitt, \textit{Caravaggio in Context}.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 15-32.
\end{itemize}
Caravaggio’s style is not merely quantified as “Lombard” due to his place of birth, but particularly because his style embodied key Lombard qualities – in both style and effects. Caravaggio’s beautiful color was a stylistic component that was consistently praised by his early biographers, including Karel Van Mander (1604),\textsuperscript{30} Giulio Mancini (1617-21),\textsuperscript{31} Giovanni Baglione (1642),\textsuperscript{32} Francesco Scanelli (1657),\textsuperscript{33} and Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1672).\textsuperscript{34} In Van Mander’s assessment Caravaggio utilized the best method of painting, “from life” and by following “Nature with all her different colors.”\textsuperscript{35} Mancini went even further in his praise for Caravaggio’s color:

Our age owes much to Michelangelo da Caravaggio for the manner of coloring which he introduced and which is now generally followed . . . It is undeniable that he made great progress in painting single figures and heads and in the use of color and that our profession in this century is greatly indebted to him.\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{32} Baglione, \textit{Vite}, 136-39.

\textsuperscript{33} Francesco Scanelli, \textit{Il microcosmo della pittura, ovvero trattato diviso in due libri}, Libro 1, Capitolo 7 (Cesena: Peril Neri, 1657), 51.

\textsuperscript{34} Bellori, \textit{Vite}, trans. Wohl, 185.

\textsuperscript{35} Van Mander (1604), reprinted in Friedlaender, \textit{Caravaggio Studies}, 260.

\textsuperscript{36} English translation published in Friedlaender, \textit{Caravaggio Studies}, 257-58; Mancini, \textit{Considerazioni sulla pittura}, 223, 225: “Deve molto questa nostra età Michelangelo da Caravaggio, per il colorir che ha introdotto, seguito adesso assai comunemente . . . Non si puo negare che per una figura sola, per le teste e colorito non sia arrivato ad un gran segno e che la profession di questo secolo non li sia molto oblige.”
A modern interpretation by Janis Bell demonstrated that these positive estimations of Caravaggio’s color were not attributed to or determined by the artist’s use of tenebrism and strong contrasts, but rather to the carefully controlled color juxtapositions. These color juxtapositions, according to Bell, increased the perception of the saturation and brightness of his colors. This may indeed be true; however, the contrast of light and shadow also play an integral role in enhancing the vitality of the colors, and especially in the projection of relief. The seventeenth-century physician and theorist, Francesco Scanelli, noted in his 1657 *Il microcosmo della pittura* that Caravaggio “invigorates color.” Caravaggio’s colors look saturated and bright, and thus “lively,” yet Bell’s analyses of color samples taken from Caravaggio’s canvases have revealed that this perception is deceptive.

The fact that Caravaggio’s hues look saturated but really are not saturated is a clue to the secret of his success: his wonderful illusion of brilliant light and color constancy depend upon the juxtaposition of colors to maximize apparent saturation. Juxtapositions and contrasts also enhance apparent lightness and darkness of colors.

The apparent vitality of Caravaggio’s colors was further enhanced by its contrast against his dark backgrounds that not only increased their brightness, but at the same time emphasized the relief of his forms. Bellori, too, in his contemporary biography, perceived that the tenebrism in Caravaggio’s works played an integral role in his use of color and effects of relief:

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38 Scanelli, *Il microcosmo*, Libro 1, Capitolo 7, 51.

39 Bell, “Light and Color,” 144.
Caravaggio – for so he had already come to be called by everyone, by the name of his native town – was becoming better known every day for the coloring that he was introducing, not sweet and with few hues as before, but intensified throughout with bold dark passages, as he made considerable use of black to give relief to the forms.\footnote{Bellori, \textit{Vite}, trans. Wohl, 180-81.}

It was not the mere vibrancy of the draperies that he praised in relation to the artist’s color, but the relief and naturalism of Caravaggio’s figures. Bellori further noted:

\begin{quote}
Michele aspired solely to the merit of color, in order for the complexion, the skin and blood and the natural surface to appear real, he addressed his eye and his skill to this alone, leaving aside the other concerns of art.\footnote{Ibid., 180.}
\end{quote}

Caravaggio’s rendering of the flesh in his \textit{Penitent Magdalene} (Fig. 59, Galleria Doria-Pamphili, Rome), in fact, elicited great praise from the classicist-minded Bellori: “She holds her face slightly to one side and her cheek, neck, and breast are suffused with a hue that is pure, simple, and true, matched by the simplicity of the whole figure.”\footnote{Ibid.} As we have seen, beautiful “natural” color and a dramatic use of light and shadow were not connected solely to Caravaggio, however, but also to a uniquely “Lombard” style. As explicated in Chapter Three, there is no doubt that there was recognition of a distinctive Lombard style in the late Cinquecento and Seicento which had clearly determined the categorization of artists under a shared banner of the Lombard School, regardless of their natal birth or training. In 1657, Scannelli significantly underscored that the manner of painting with “most beautiful naturalism” (\textit{più bella naturalezza}) derived from the Lombard School, whose primary exponent and \textit{Capo}, was Correggio. He then further...
expounded on other (more contemporary) artists who were included within the Lombard School:

We find in the same School others of different and extraordinary talents, whose paintings are not similar to those of their predecessors, and which procure more praise based on their proper genius with observations of details, a manner corresponding much with the most beautiful naturalness, including, the great Leader [of the Lombard School] Correggio for being able with such means to form all he could with a particular manner of working, most graceful, delicate, and true; in this given manner, [we] see exactly in [the work of] Federico Barocci, Lodovico Cigoli, Francesco Vanni, Michelangelo da Caravaggio, Christoforo Allori, called Bronzino, and of the others named, the Little Spaniard (Jusepe de Ribera), Bartolomeo Manfredi, and other similar ones.

To the above mentioned artists of the Lombard School Scanelli added: the Carracci, Guido Reni, Domenichino, Guercino, Francesco Albani, and Giovanni Lanfranco.

After the decline in the merit of painting the art of painting was reformed by the most excellent Carracci and their many fine works. These and their followers, Reni, Zampieri, Barbieri, Albani, Lanfranco, and many other worthy modern masters, have in our day made the School of Lombardy and have rendered it famous and immortal everywhere.

According to Scanelli, the sincerity of the expression of the affetti, the “natural” colors, and the rendering of three-dimensional forms through the contrast of light and deep shadow, were key attributes of the Lombard School, and thus the heritage of the culture.

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44 Enggass and Brown, *Italian and Spanish Art*, 45-46.
of “tangible presence” in Lombardy, linking artists as diverse as Leonardo, Correggio, Annibale Carracci, Caravaggio, and others.\textsuperscript{45} It is, in effect, Lombard naturalism and their adherence to a credo of \textit{tangible presence} that accords with the Post-Tridentine treatises on sacred painting and Spanish literature on meditation by Luis de Granada, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and St. John of the Cross.\textsuperscript{46} And it was Caravaggio, above all, who instinctively created an effective formulation of Lombard naturalism for sacred art. Paleotti’s ideals of “truth to nature,” paintings made as “if alive,” to bridging the gap between the past and the present, and making inducements to meditation, find resonance in Caravaggio’s Roman sacred imagery beginning with his public debut at San Luigi dei Francesi (Fig. 60). Caravaggio’s religious paintings present a verity of colors, \textit{rilievo}, a consistent pictorial illumination, and overall unity. The viewers’ emotions are evoked through these colors and the dramatic contrast of light and shadow; that is, the \textit{varietà de’ colori} and \textit{l’ombre} described by Paleotti as elements that speak to our senses. For Paleotti, delight derived from naturalism and tangibility in sacred painting that had the power to persuade the viewer by transporting or changing the room in which the viewer stands, and thus making those absent or remote appear present.\textsuperscript{47} Caravaggio confronts viewers with a painted world that reflects their own. His figures project forward with an immediacy and tangibility that demand the viewers’ attention and contemplation.

\textsuperscript{45} Scanelli, \textit{Il microcosmo}, Libro 1, Capitolo 1, 8; Libro 1, Capitolo 2, 17-19; Libro 1, Capitolo 7, 51-52; Libro 1, Capitolo 13, 91; Libro 2, Capitolo 10, 196-202, 277-78.

\textsuperscript{46} See Chapter 4, pp. 96-108.

\textsuperscript{47} Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}, Libro 1, Capitolo, 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le Imagini christiane,” 70r.
Tenebrous, nondescript backgrounds appear in all of Caravaggio’s public works, beginning with his public debut in the Contarelli Chapel, S. Luigi dei Francesi, Rome. In Caravaggio’s *Calling of St. Matthew* (Fig. 61), the use of tenebrism pushes the figures close to the frontal plane and thus closer in proximity to the viewer, both physically and psychologically. Furthermore, his employment of dramatic chiaroscuro not only maintained the verity of the colors, but also removed any temporal or geographical anchors. While Caravaggio depicted specific biblical narrative scenes, he elided the boundaries between the historical and the contemporary by depicting his protagonists as everyday individuals, both physically real and sensuously tangible. It is this very aspect of naturalism, of truth to nature, of living bodies, that Caravaggio’s contemporaries and early biographers praised. Scanelli noted in his 1657 *Il microcosmo della pittura* that:

> [Caravaggio] was a unique exponent of naturalism . . . [he painted] human portraits . . . complete figures . . . [and] narratives, with such truth, vigor, and relief that quite often nature, if not actually equaled and conquered, would nevertheless bring confusion to the viewer through his astonishing deceptions, which attracted and ravished human sight; and so he was regarded by many as being most excellent above all others.  

While Caravaggio’s extreme naturalism simultaneously drew harsh criticism, it is this confrontation with the verity and description of tangible, flesh-and-blood figures that Paleotti identified as stimuli of both sensuous and rational delight. As in rhetoric, “imitation” was a necessary principle for the art of painting, for it was the imitation of life and truth that brought delight to the viewer.  


49 Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 1, Capitolo, 22, “Della dilettazione, che apportano le Imagini christiane,” 70v.
The figures in the *Calling of St. Matthew* are not only tangible, but St. Matthew and his companions are dressed in contemporary clothing. The space is shallow, and the raking light that falls from the upper right is the only means by which the viewer is given a glimpse of the setting: an average, nondescript Roman street immersed in shadow. Matthew (Fig. 62), moreover, is shown as an everyday man, not an exceptional being. Here, Caravaggio visually explicates for the viewer a scriptural verity: that a normal man has been chosen as a disciple of Christ.

Caravaggio’s approach and style not only visually bind him to Paleotti’s “theology of nature” and Lombard naturalism, but they are intricately connected with contemporary practices and exercises on meditation. The popularity of miracles, visions and meditation during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century is particularly interesting when considering the works of Caravaggio. The disparity between the contemporary dress of the figures on the left (St. Matthew and his companions) and the historical clothing and haloes of Christ and St. Peter on the right are the only indicators separating the common men from the heavenly; nevertheless they are all portrayed tangibly as earth-bound figures. This contrast in dress helps to stimulate the viewer’s meditation. Viewers identify with St. Matthew and his companions, as they appear as everyday individuals, tangible and unidealized. They display real emotions – disbelief, incomprehension, surprise, and unawareness – through their gestures, poses, and gazes. An effective connection is thus forged that prompts the viewer to meditate upon the scene, and brings the realization that “miracles” or “visions” (of Christ and St. Peter) can occur in the present day, to a common man.
Caravaggio’s treatment of light and shadow in the Contarelli Chapel, what would become his signature Roman style, further contributes to the stimulation of the viewers’ meditation. The simple, tenebrous setting of Caravaggio’s religious imagery plays an essential role in the iconic formula formerly served by the gold background of traditional icons. It is also a visual meditative stimulus. The dark backdrop and the forceful light not only isolate the scene from any narrative context and remove any temporal boundaries, but it also freezes the action. As Pamela Askew observed, “Caravaggio’s drama is held in the present moment; before and after are sliced away.” The frozen action demands that the viewer focus on the image. Caravaggio selects the most tension-filled moment, which combined with the static quality, prompts the viewer to complete the action and the story in their minds, unfolding like a meditation. The dark background, furthermore, pushes the figures in close proximity to the viewers and incites them to see the scene in terms of a personal, emotional relationship. This immediacy intimately also directs their attention on the “frozen” corporeal figures and encourages them to contemplate and meditate upon the scene. The dark background gives the image the appearance of a mental picture (prescribed in meditative exercises), and in particular, the appearance of a vision.

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50 Askew, “Caravaggio: Outward Action,” 248. In this essay, Askew also proposed that Caravaggio purposely depicted a “double drama” in his religious paintings, where one protagonist experiences enlightenment while simultaneously another is ignorant and unaware. This is a fascinating reading, however, it seems unlikely that a common viewer, Paleotti’s *idioto*, would recognize such a complex intention.

51 Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* required the participant (or meditator) to conjure a mental picture of the place or scene of a story on which they were to meditae (composition of place). Loyola’s contemporary, Luis de Granada (*Brief Memorial and
The right lateral canvas in the Contarelli Chapel, which depicts the Martyrdom of St. Matthew (Fig. 63), exhibits similar stylistic conventions to those of the Calling. Once again naturalism and tenebrism prevail, simultaneously engaging and moving the emotions of the viewers. A raking light falling from an unseen source at the upper left breaks the dramatic darkness that engulfs the scene, at once enhancing and thrusting the corporeal bodies forward toward the viewer. None of the figures are beautiful or idealized, but average, realistic earthly beings. The viewers’ attention is drawn to the center of the painting, where the light illuminates the vicious snarl of the executioner (Fig. 64), and the wrinkled brow and prone body of St. Matthew below him (Fig. 65). St. Matthew has already been wounded (evidenced by the blood on his robes), yet the final blow has not been inflicted. It is a scene filled with tragedy and pathos, and the only sign of the saint’s triumph in death is the angel, approaching from a cloud at the upper right who hands St. Matthew the palm of martyrdom. The angel is the only visible representative of the heavenly realm, yet, he too, is treated in a very tangible and earthy manner. There is no burst of heavenly light, no overt symbolic or literal division between heaven and earth. The setting is once again nondescript, with only hints of an altar in the background, and a baptismal basin in the foreground. The focus is placed on the figures

Guide of the Duties of a Christian, 1561) also advocated that the meditators imagine each mystery as occurring before them in the here and now. See Chapter 4, pp. 97-104.

52 In his remarks on Caravaggio’s Martyrdom of St. Matthew, Bellori pointed out that the movements were inadequate for the istoria. See Bellori, Vite, trans. Wohl, 181.

53 For divergent iconographical interpretations of the two versions of the altarpiece, see Irving Lavin, “Divine Inspiration in Caravaggio’s Two St. Matthews,” Art
and the frozen action, not the particulars of setting, or demarcations between realms. It is an experiential event taking place in the present. The viewers are thus visually coaxed to meditate upon the image, imagining and completing the image in their own minds.

Caravaggio’s final contribution to the Contarelli Chapel was the altarpiece depicting the Inspiration of St. Matthew. Two versions of the altarpiece were completed. The first version (Fig. 66, formerly Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, destroyed) was apparently rejected, which Caravaggio’s early biographers lead us to believe was a result of the painting’s lack of decorum. The second version (Fig. 67), which still hangs above the altar in the Contarelli Chapel, conforms better to the stylistic conventions employed in the lateral canvases. Here, however, the saintliness of Matthew is signified by a clear halo circling his head, an appropriate inclusion for an altarpiece. The figure of St. Matthew nevertheless is depicted in human terms. Caravaggio was not compelled to resort to the traditional manner of painting a beautiful, perfect, and heroic figure to suggest a divine being. His face and hands are wrinkled, and he half-stands/half-kneels precariously on the bench at his writing table. The angel above him, who ticks off the words for Matthew’s Gospel, is a heavenly being, but like the angel in the Martyrdom of St. Matthew, he too is portrayed without heavenly accoutrements and divine scenography.


See Baglione, Vite, 137, and Bellori, Vite, trans. Wohl, 181. Both Baglione and Bellori recorded the rejection of the first version of the altarpiece, but the reasons are undocumented. Caravaggio scholars tend to conclude that a lack of decorum was the issue, spanning from either the close proximity of St. Matthew and the angel, or the St. Matthew’s ignoble pose, particularly his foreshortened dirty foot that projects toward the altar.
Caravaggio freezes the moment at the angel’s first appearance, which startles Matthew, jarring him from his seated position. His abrupt movement has rocked the bench and as a result, the left leg hangs precariously beyond the ledge, into the chapel space, and toward the viewer. Caravaggio presents viewers with a human reaction, and one that captures their attention. The inky blackness of the background and the raking light from the upper left enhances the verity of St. Matthew’s red and orange robes, and his corporeal body. Paleotti’s “theology of nature” and Lombard “tangible presence” prevails here as well.

The success of his work in the Contarelli Chapel, and with it the implicit endorsement of his creative reimagining of Lombard style, brought Caravaggio another significant chapel commission. In 1600, Caravaggio was given the opportunity to provide two large lateral canvases for the Cerasi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo (Fig. 68). The scene of the Crucifixion of St. Peter (Fig. 69), on the left wall of the Cerasi Chapel, is isolated against Caravaggio’s archetypal black background. Caravaggio’s judicious utilization of white projects the figures closer to the viewer. The scene is reduced to the essential figures, powerfully directing the viewers’ contemplation to the heart of the moment. It is clear from the composition of this canvas (as well as the right lateral of the Conversion of St. Paul) that Caravaggio considered the viewers’ engagement. Leo Steinberg indicated that the oblique perspective of St. Peter’s cross conforms to the viewing perspective of the spectator. Viewers look directly into the face of St. Peter (Fig. 70) who has already been nailed to the cross. The identities of the executioners (Fig.

who are in the midst of lifting the upside down cross on which St. Peter is nailed are anonymous. Their faces are hidden from view or engulfed in shadow, thus simultaneously drawing viewers’ attention to St. Peter and enhancing the cruelty and unsympathetic nature of the executioners through their anonymity. The viewer is not meant to identify with their malice, but with St. Peter’s resolve. As Paleotti had indicated in his Discorso, the Catholic Church approved the representation of martyrdoms to the eyes of Christian populace as:

> heroic signs of patience, of the magnanimity of martyred saints, and their trophies of unvanquished faith and glory . . . consider how much more incomparable are the greatest pain and afflictions of the martyrs, than those that we feel in the infirmity and miseries of this life, we learn to support and scorn that which is used to disturb the growing confidence in God . . . .

Caravaggio confronts the viewer with an aged, wrinkled St. Peter with dirty hands, and bare feet. He is exceptional, but he is not portrayed as such. In order to secure the viewer’s emotional and psychological connection with the saint, Caravaggio utilizes his mimetic powers to portray Peter as human and common as possible. Visually, St. Paul looks like an average man from the popolo. In this manner, his unflinching faith in the face of torture and impending death is impressed more strongly and permanently on the viewer’s mind and heart.

In his Conversion of St. Paul (Fig. 72), Caravaggio once more confronted viewers with an image of unequaled naturalism, tangibility and immediacy. He has removed all the traditional trappings of the miracle of St. Paul’s conversion. We do not see the literal,

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heavenly appearance of Christ, but mysteriously the divine light of grace. Caravaggio
draws the viewer’s attention to the corporeal form of Paul (Fig. 73), whose outstretched
arms reaches out toward the divine light of God, demanding the viewer to identify with
him and his spiritual experience. Moreover, Paul is not depicted as an exceptional being,
but as human – prone and vulnerable - with dirt beneath his fingernails (Fig. 74).
Caravaggio’s image seems to communicate the idea that it is through seemingly ordinary
experiences that viewers attain spiritual enlightenment.

The tenebrism in *The Conversion of St. Paul* not only contributes to the
appearance of the painting as a mental picture, possibly conjured by the viewers’
imagination, but equally as a vision. Paul’s conversion is being *re-lived* by the viewer.
The viewers are simultaneously experiencing enlightenment with Paul, with the image
taking on the appearance of their own private vision as if summoned up by their own
meditation. Viewers, in this sense, experience their own conversion. Caravaggio’s
nondescript background allows the viewers to compose mentally the setting in the theatre
of their own mind. By breaking the barrier between the viewer and the painted image, by
eliding the historical with the present, Caravaggio provides the means for the viewer to
participate and ultimately to achieve the same spiritual cognition experienced by Saul/St.
Paul.

As in the case with his Contarelli altarpiece, Caravaggio apparently suffered
another set of rejections for the Cerasi Chapel, for he produced two versions of the
laterals. The first versions of the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* and the *Conversion of St. Paul*
were, according to Baglione, rejected “because they did not please the patron.”\textsuperscript{57} The reasons behind the patron’s refusal of the paintings, however, are once again unclear. Baglione merely stated that they were worked in a different manner.\textsuperscript{58} The first version of the \textit{Crucifixion} is lost, but some scholars believe that the \textit{Conversion of St. Paul} (Fig. 75) in the Odescalchi collection in Rome can be identified with the first version. If this is the case, Baglione’s statement makes sense. The Odescalchi \textit{Conversion} is as confusing, disorganized, and cluttered, as the second version is clear, organized, and simple. The two versions are stylistically worlds apart. This has led other scholars to question not only the authenticity of the Odescalchi painting, but whether Caravaggio worked on this subject at an earlier point in his career.\textsuperscript{59} The latter argument seems more plausible, as the Odescalchi \textit{Conversion} is similar in style to Caravaggio’s early works of \textit{Ecstasy of St. Francis} (Fig. 76, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut), and the \textit{Rest on the Flight into Egypt} (Fig. 77, Galleria Doria-Pamphili, Rome). Regardless, once again, the rejected first versions were immediately acquired by a collector, no less a cardinal: Jacopo Sannesio.\textsuperscript{60} The focus on Caravaggio’s rejected paintings has, it seems, captured the imagination of those who want to see Caravaggio as a rebellious, defiant, irreligious

\textsuperscript{57} Baglione, \textit{Vite}, 137.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} This debate is a sticky one. The date of this work is dependent upon whether one believes that this is indeed the rejected first version of the Cerasi lateral mentioned by Caravaggio’s biographers, or whether stylistic evolution is a more compelling document. For a discussion of the literature on this debate see: Vittorio Sgarbi, \textit{Caravaggio} (Milan: Skira Editore, S.p.A., 2007), catalogue 18, 82.

\textsuperscript{60} Baglione, \textit{Vite}, 137.
artist. This preoccupation has diverted our attention from significant points: First, Caravaggio was given the opportunity to provide new versions of his rejected work; second, the rejected works were immediately acquired by prominent individuals close to the pope and the papal court; and finally, Caravaggio continued to receive important public commissions, and increasingly private ones. In fact, less than one year after the completion of the Cerasi laterals in 1601, Caravaggio received an important commission for the Oratorian church of Santa Maria della Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova).

For the Chiesa Nuova, the Oratorian church for which Scipione Pulzone had painted a *Crucifixion*, Caravaggio executed an *Entombment* (Fig. 78, Pinacoteca, Vatican) for the Vittrice Chapel. Similar to Pulzone’s altarpiece (and Caravaggio’s previous sacred works), the *Entombment* takes place against a plain, dark background. It is devoid of any narrative setting other than the stone slab on which the figures stand, and minimal vegetation in the foreground. Christ is being carried by St. John the Evangelist and Nicodemus. The narrative action, however, is suspended as there is no clear destination for the body of Christ. The story is not depicted in a manner typical of narrative painting as it does not unfold in space and time. Christ, in fact, appears to be held in a position of presentation to the viewer. St. John supports Christ’s upper torso, while Nicodemus holds his legs. The body of Christ is held horizontally, but is tilted slightly so his face and upper torso are more clearly visible to the viewer (Fig. 79). The action is frozen and it is indeterminable whether the body is in the midst of being carried
somewhere or lowered (possibly on the stone of unction or the altar).⁶¹ The Virgin and
the two Marys are depicted in gestures of mourning directly behind St. John and
Nicodemus so as not to obstruct the worshipper’s view. It seems unquestionable that
Christ is being presented to the viewer. This interpretation is particularly underscored by
the direct, staring gaze of Nicodemus who seems to demand our attention. Caravaggio
wraps the body of Christ in a white winding sheet, drawing our gaze to his form and
indicating that the force of the light falls primarily on him. He further uses white in a
judicious manner throughout the image: in the drapery of the Virgin, and the sleeves of
the two Mary’s beside her. These fields of white are smaller, thus they do not detract the
focus away from Christ. By incorporating these smaller fields of white, Caravaggio
detaches the figure group from the dark background, and pushes the figures forward.
This creates a sense of immediacy and tangibility and as Marcia Hall describes “The
strategy of moving the mourners closer to the worshipper works psychologically to make
their grief more urgent to us.”⁶²

The worshippers placed before Caravaggio’s Entombment are urged by the
immediacy and verisimilitude to focus on the image. We are confronted with figures that
are tangible and real, and a scene which projects out toward our space. The intense
effects of light and strong contours underscore the static poses and gestures and the
overall absence of narrative action; it is a pregnant moment. This clear confrontation
with the scene and particularly the body of Christ is accentuated by the verity of the

⁶¹ Mary Ann Graeve, “The Stone of Uction in Caravaggio’s Painting for the

⁶² Hall, After Raphael, 279.
figures. They are not idealized, beautiful, perfect beings. The Virgin (Fig. 80), in particular, is portrayed realistically, aged and wrinkled. Here, Caravaggio flings artistic tradition to the wind, and depicts the Virgin at an age appropriate for a mother of a thirty-three year old man. This is an important deviation, for Paleotti had explicitly stated in his 1582 *Discorso*, that it was erroneous and disproportionate to depict the Virgin “with the face of a young mother hardly twenty-five years, yet the son was already thirty-three.”\(^63\) We are therefore presented with a world that is truthful and reflects our own. The extraction of the scene from a narrative context and its placement before a dark background further induces the viewer to meditate on the scene as not only a historical event, but one that is occurring in the present. As he had done for the laterals in the Contarelli and Cerasi Chapels, Caravaggio transforms his altarpiece of the *Entombment* into an experiential event. The viewer’s fixation on the scene is further enabled by this dark background, which not only pushes the figures forward, but also isolates them thus engaging the full attention and emotions of the viewer. Christian worshippers are intended to venerate Christ and his sacrifice for mankind, while at the same time we are encouraged to visualize and meditate upon his life and Passion. The figures placed before the dark backdrop take on the appearance of a vision in one’s mind. It is as if we have closed our eyes, and visualized this scene, just as one would practice in Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*. The mechanics of Caravaggio’s painted and imagined scenes worked in the same manner. Tangibility or “composition of place” encouraged the worshipper to subsequent visualization and meditation.

The altarpiece for the Cavalletti chapel depicting the *Madonna di Loreto* (Fig. 81) in Sant’Agostino represents the epitome of Caravaggio’s public formulation of a style that appeals to the common man. Caravaggio has once again pared down his setting by including only a plain doorway and step and immersing the entire scene in tenebrous shadow. As in many of his narrative paintings, Caravaggio eliminates all spatial and temporal borders. The pilgrims on the lower right kneel before the Madonna and Child who appear within a doorway. Although the Madonna has the outward appearance of a solid, tangible figure, it is immediately clear that she is a vision. She is lit from above, her face illuminated in an ethereal glow (Fig. 82). She towers over the pilgrims on the step below her, and yet she appears weightless as she rests on the toes of her feet.\(^{64}\) We are witnessing the pilgrims’ vision of the Madonna and Child; as if, as Howard Hibbard has suggested, a statue of the Madonna and Child has come to life through the pilgrims’ prayer and meditation. The close proximity of the pilgrims, however, creates the sense that the viewer is kneeling within the same space. The light, which appears to fall from the doorway above, not only bathes the Madonna and Child and the pilgrims, but also seems to hit the viewer. The kneeling viewer is placed within the trajectory of this divine light. The tenebrous quality and use of light in Caravaggio’s altarpiece once again visually suggests to the viewers that they too are witnessing a vision, through their own meditation of this painting. Here we are given visual proof that even the humble poor can be rewarded with visions and spiritual enlightenment via prayer and meditation.

The verity and tangibility of the figures, however, simultaneously evoke literal presence. The corporeal bodies of the Virgin and Christ Child, although haloed and placed on a higher level than the pilgrims, are not distanced from the painted or the present day viewers. The Virgin is ethereal, but still earth bound. Caravaggio’s propensity to relate to the idioti is poignantly illustrated in the dirty, unkempt clothes, and muddy feet of the pilgrims (Figs. 83, 84). The humility and naturalism of Caravaggio’s pilgrims is intricately linked to Lombard “tangible presence.” The Milanese artist and theorist Lomazzo, in his 1563 Libro de Sogni, interestingly had Leonardo state in an imaginary dialogue, that if he were to paint his Last Supper “today” – that is in the mid-sixteenth century – he would show the apostles with long disheveled hair, tanned skin and dusty feet as this was how they really looked.\(^65\) Lomazzo’s statement foreshadows the actual realization of Leonardo’s theoretical and artistic views in Caravaggio’s sacred paintings. As Pamela M. Jones eloquently stated:

> In Caravaggio’s painting the pilgrims do not have to imagine the Madonna and Child before them, living and breathing; the holy figures, who are living in glory, are really there to listen to their prayers. The invisible, heavenly reality is made visible for them and for real worshippers in the chapel.\(^66\)

Caravaggio’s Madonna di Loreto corresponds to Paleotti’s position that the universality of painting, painting as a linguaggio commune, is effectuated through naturalism, tangibility, simplicity, and affect. These qualities are equally concomitant with the


designation of sacred painting as the primary vehicles to meditation, so that all Christians may reach their own epiphany.

Caravaggio’s next two public commissions met with disappointment. Both the 1605-06 *Madonna dei Palafrenieri* (Fig. 85, Galleria Borghese, Rome) for the altar of St. Anne in St. Peter’s, and the *Death of the Virgin* (Fig. 86, Musée du Louvre, Paris) for the Cherubini Chapel in Santa Maria della Scala, were rejected on uncertain and undocumented grounds. We have only the biased remarks of Caravaggio’s biographers to explain the unfortunate removal of these two altarpieces from their intended sites. Baglione stated that the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri* was “removed from the building by order of the Cardinals in charge of the edifice,”67 and that the *Death of the Virgin* was removed from Santa Maria della Scala “because he [Caravaggio] had indecorously depicted her swollen and with bare legs.”68 Mancini added in 1617-21 that the latter altarpiece was removed from the church because “Caravaggio had used a courtesan as the model for the person of the Madonna.”69 In 1676, Bellori claimed that the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri* was taken down from its altar in St. Peter’s because “the Virgin and Jesus as a nude boy were portrayed ignobly,”70 and that the *Death of the Virgin* was taken down from its altar because “he had too closely imitated the bloated body of a dead woman.”71

67 Baglione, *Vite*, 137.

68 Ibid., 138.

69 Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, vol. 1, 224.


71 Ibid.
The issue at hand was not one of style, but decorum. In both altarpieces, Caravaggio had included haloes to signify the divine, yet Caravaggio’s early biographers lead us to believe that he crossed the boundaries of decorum in respect to the infant Christ’s nudity in the *Madonna dei Palafrenieri*, and the realistic portrayal of the dead Virgin in the *Death of the Virgin*.

The proposed reason for the rejection of the *Death of the Virgin* as a problem with its decorum not its style, is substantiated by the fact that the church fathers of Santa Maria della Scala commissioned Carlo Saraceni, a follower of Caravaggio, to execute a replacement. Saraceni painted two versions for the replacement altarpiece. According to Catherine Puglisi, the Discalced Carmelites demanded a visual representation of the Virgin’s rank as Queen of Heaven, and Saraceni too was asked to redo his first attempt. In his second version (Fig. 87), which still hangs in the Cherubini Chapel, Saraceni included a heavenly burst of cherubs, a golden glow behind the Virgin’s head, and a cherub who is about to place a crown of roses on her head. Saraceni’s *Death of the Virgin* does not portray a dead Mary, but rather focuses on her divine, heavenly role, a presage to her Coronation and reunion with Christ in Heaven. There is a clear demarcation of heaven and earth, yet Saraceni appropriates Caravaggio’s tenebrism and the naturalistic rendering of the Apostles. In his *Life* of Saraceni, Baglione, in fact, claimed that Saraceni professed that he was an imitator of Caravaggio. Mancini placed Saraceni in the School of Caravaggio; artists who observed visual truth and strong contrasts of light and

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73 Baglione, *Vite*, 147.
darkness. According to Mancini, Saraceni studied from this “academy from life” and followed in part, “the manner of Caravaggio.” It is highly unlikely that the Discalced Carmelites would have engaged a Caravaggio follower to execute the replacement altarpiece if Caravaggio’s style itself was a problem.

Extreme naturalism was Caravaggio’s *modus operandi*, and the patrons surely were aware of this. Caravaggio was unflinching in his conviction that naturalism and tangibility could cross the boundaries of time and space. The rejected altarpieces for St. Peter’s and Santa Maria della Scala were, like the first versions of the Contarelli altarpiece and the Cerasi laterals, immediately acquired by collectors. The *Madonna dei Palafrenieri* was purchased on June 16, 1606 by Cardinal Scipione Borghese, just two months after it was taken down from the altar in St. Peter’s. After being rejected from the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of Santa Maria della Scala, the *Death of the Virgin* seems to have drawn the interest of several collectors. Giulio Mancini, one of Caravaggio’s early biographers, wrote a letter (dated January 12, 1607) to his brother Deifebo in Siena, confirming his interest to buy the painting. The *Death of the Virgin*, however, was eventually acquired by Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua through the negotiations and urging of the painter Peter Paul Rubens. Rubens, who also worked for

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74 Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, vol. 1, 254.

75 Cardinal Borghese, moreover, paid 25 more scudi than was originally paid to Caravaggio by the Palafrenieri (papal grooms). See Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 197.
the Oratorians at Santa Maria della Vallicella, proclaimed the *Death of the Virgin* a masterpiece.\textsuperscript{76}

Caravaggio experienced great public success in Rome from his debut in the Contarelli Chapel in 1599 until his departure in 1606. Even in the instances where his paintings were rejected the result was gratifying to the painter, for in each case, there was always an eager collector willing to purchase them. Caravaggio’s novelty and revolutionary style may have drawn the interest of hungry collectors keen on embellishing their private collections, yet it does not explain why time and time again, interspersed with instances of rejections, Caravaggio was sought for the most important, visible public commissions. The answer lies in the convergence of Caravaggio’s human approach to sacred style with a Counter-Reformation culture determined to find a means to reach the *popolo*.

Caravaggio’s Patrons and the Cultivation of the “Natural”

Caravaggio’s success with public commissions also carried over to his private patronage. It was Caravaggio’s key patrons, most of them cardinals, who brought him into contact with Paleotti’s circle and ultimately the cardinal’s “theology of nature” as expounded in his *Discorso*. Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte was Caravaggio’s first major patron and protector who housed the artist in his home, the Palazzo Madama, from ca. 1595-1600. He was among the leading collectors in Rome and owned one of the

\textsuperscript{76} Peter Paul Rubens was in Rome from mid-1605 to 1608 working on the high altarpiece for Santa Maria in Vallicella. The letters concerning the sale transaction were published and translated in Friedlaender; see Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, 307-10.
largest groups of works by the hand of Caravaggio (eight originals, and two copies after Caravaggio) all dating before 1600.\textsuperscript{77} Among the Caravaggio originals that were listed in the inventory of Del Monte were: 1. a small painting of a \textit{Carafe} (lost);\textsuperscript{78} 2. \textit{The Cardsharps} (Fig. 88, Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth);\textsuperscript{79} 3. \textit{The Fortune Teller} (Fig. 89, Musei Capitolini, Rome);\textsuperscript{80} 4. \textit{The Musicians} (Fig. 90, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York);\textsuperscript{81} 5. \textit{The Lute Player} (Fig. 91, Private Collection, New York);\textsuperscript{82} 6. St. \textit{John the Baptist} (Fig. 92, Musei Capitolini, Rome);\textsuperscript{83} 7. \textit{St. Francis in Ecstasy} (Fig. 76).\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{77} For the inventory of Del Monte’s collection see Frommel, “Caravaggio’s Frühwerk,” 5-51; Gilbert, \textit{Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals}, 111; and Waźbiński, \textit{Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte}, vol. 2, 575. Del Monte’s collection included a copy of St. Matthew[...], a copy of a painting of Christ with St. Thomas [probably a copy of the Giustiniani owned \textit{Incredulity of St. Thomas}]. He also commissioned the \textit{Medusa} from Caravaggio, but it was given as a gift to Grand Duke Ferdinando de’ Medici.


\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 575: “Una Zingara.”

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 581v: “Una Musica.”

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 582v: “Un quadro con un huomo che suono il leuto.”

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 575v: “Un S. Giovanni Battista.” The \textit{St. John the Baptist} was probably acquired later. Although it cannot be securely documented, there are two payments in Ciriaco Mattei’s account registry that mention a work (not identified) that was being purchased from Caravaggio. The \textit{St. John the Baptist} is listed in the testament of Giovanni Battista Mattei (Ciriaco’s son and heir), dated December 4, 1616. In 1624, it
8. and *St. Catherine of Alexandria* (Fig. 93, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid).\(^8^5\) The works commissioned and acquired from Caravaggio, while mainly of secular subjects, are significant as they indicate Del Monte’s interest in naturalistic painting, as well as the Cardinal’s (and the artist’s interest) in everyday life. Other paintings in Del Monte’s collection include works from so-called Lombard artists, such as Bernardino Luini (Fig. 94),\(^8^6\) Antiveduto Grammatica,\(^8^7\) a *St. Catherine of Alexandria with the Wheel* by Garofalo,\(^8^8\) a *head of St. Francis* by Muziano,\(^8^9\) and five paintings by Scipione Pulzone was donated to Cardinal Del Monte, after which it appeared in Del Monte’s post-mortem inventory of 1627. See Francesca Cappelletti and Laura Testa, *Il Trattentimento di Virtuosi: Le collezioni secentesche di quadri nei Palazzi Mattei di Roma* (Rome: Àrgos Edizioni, 1994), 105, 198.


\(^8^5\) Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 20, 90. This work is listed in the inventory of Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte as “A Saint Catherine with her wheel, work by Michel Agnolo Caravaggio with a gilt frame seven palmi.”


\(^8^7\) Ibid., *Indice dell’Inventario del 1627* [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 574v, 575v, 576v, 578v, 582v, 583v]. Ten works by Antiveduto Grammatica are cited in his 1627 inventory: “un filosofo colco in quadro ovato,” “una Madonna con N. S. Bambino, che dorme,” “una disputa di N.S.,” “Un Salomone quando Idolatrò,” “Un’Angelo Custode,” “Un Salvatore,” “Un altro Salvatore variato, Un S. Bastiano,” “Un Monte Parnaso,” “Un Quadro con una Musica.”

\(^8^8\) Ibid., *Indice dell’Inventario del 1627* [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 581].
who, as we have seen, worked in a Lombard style.\textsuperscript{90} Nine works by Northern landscape and still-life specialists can also be found in Del Monte’s inventory, including six by Jan Brueghel the Elder,\textsuperscript{91} two by Paul Bril,\textsuperscript{92} and two by Adam Elsheimer.\textsuperscript{93} Of special significance is that in addition to the ten works by Caravaggio, Del Monte also owned numerous works by Caravaggio’s followers. These \textit{Caravaggisti} include Giovanni Baglione,\textsuperscript{94} Gerrit Van Honthorst,\textsuperscript{95} Jusepe de Ribera,\textsuperscript{96} and Carlo Saraceni.\textsuperscript{97} In addition

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ważbiński, \textit{Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte}, vol. 2, 575. \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, unnumbered].
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 575, 577, 582v, 584, 585]: “Un ritratto,” “Un Ritratto dell’Ill.mo et Rev.mo Sig.r Cardinale Del Monte,” “Un quadro di Ferdinando gran duca […] quando era Cardinale,” “Una Testa di una Madonna,” “Una Testa di Madonna.”
\item \textsuperscript{92} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 577v]: “Un Paese,” “Un Paese nel q. si rappresenta Campo Vaccino.”
\item \textsuperscript{93} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 585v]: “Doi Paesini di Adamo et Coperchio d’Ebano.”
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid., \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 577v]: “Una Giuditta.” Baglione’s adoption of Caravaggio’s style was noted by many contemporaries, including Mancini, who noted that Baglione “applied that style of Caravaggio.” See Mancini, \textit{Considerazioni sulla pittura}, 241. Baglione was also among the \textit{valenthuomini}, those who imitated natural things well, cited by Caravaggio in Baglione’s libel suit against the artist in 1603.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ważbiński, \textit{Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte}, vol. 2, 575. \textit{Indice dell’Inventario del 1627} [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 583]: “Un quadro con una Musica di Gilardo Fiammengo.” In his biography of Gerard Honthorst, Mancini claimed that when Honthorst arrived in Rome, the style of
to these noted Caravaggisti, Del Monte’s collection also included numerous works by artists who drew some inspiration from Caravaggio, but did not embrace his uncompromising realism; these include the Cavaliere d’Arpino (Giuseppe Cesari),98 Guercino,99 and Guido Reni.100 Del Monte’s collection reflect his proclivity for the Caravaggio was communally followed, and as such, Honthorst followed the path of the “accademie del vivo.” See Mancini, Considerazioni sulla pittura, 258.


98 Ibid., Indice dell’Inventario del 1627 [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 580v, 583]: “Un Adamo, et Eva scacciati dal Paradiso […] in rame,” “Un Salvatore in tondo.” Named by Caravaggio as among the “valenthuomini,” those who knew how to paint natural things well. Mancini, however, put D’Arpino in a School of his own, as his style fell between those of the Caravaggio and Carracci Schools. “E se bene non va osservando tanto essattamente il natural come quella del Caravaggio, nè quella gravità e sodezza di quella dell’i Caracci, nondimeno ha in sè quella vaghezza che un tratto rapisce l’occhio e diletta.” See Mancini, Considerazioni sulla pittura, 109.


100 Ważbiński, Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte, vol. 2, 575. Indice dell’Inventario del 1627 [ASR, 30, Not. Cap. (P. Vespignano), Uff. 28, vol. 138, 575, 576, 585]: “Un quadro di S. Sebastiano,” “Un quadro di una Madonna assunta delle quale è parte di mano di Guido,” “Una Santa Caterina delle Ruote.” In Bellori’s Vite of Caravaggio, Guido Reni is mentioned as an artist who “succumbed somewhat to the style of this man and presented himself as a naturalist.” See Bellori, Vite, trans. Wohl, 184. Moreover, in Vincenzo Giustiniani’s letter to Teodoro (Dirck van Amayden), the
interdependent subjects of empirical science and nature, in the preponderance of naturalistic paintings by Caravaggio, his followers, Lombard artists, and those who adopted the style of Lombard naturalism.

Del Monte, moreover, may have contributed to other collectors’ interest in Caravaggio’s works and may even have introduced them to the artist. Del Monte, as we have seen, enjoyed a close friendship with Cardinal Federico Borromeo, which resulted in many correspondences and exchange of works of art. Both Del Monte and Borromeo were from Northern Italy, a fact that may explain their shared interest in naturalistic painting as evidenced by their respective collections. It was probably Del Monte who introduced Cardinal Federico Borromeo to the artist, and may have played an integral role in Borromeo’s acquisition of Caravaggio’s Basket of Fruit (Fig. 95, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan). Borromeo, in turn, probably introduced Del Monte to his favorite artists, Jan Brueghel the Elder and Paul Bril. As the scope of this dissertation

101 Langdon, Caravaggio, 103.

102 Federico Borromeo’s Ambrosiana Collection has been the topic of much study. Arlene Quint’s 1974 dissertation provides a brief overview of Borromeo’s early years, and includes a complete discussion of Borromeo’s collection in conjunction with his comments on particular works in his Musaeum. See Quint, Cardinal Federico Borromeo. Pamela M. Jones has published many studies on Borromeo’s collections and his theology, culminating in her 1993 study of Borromeo’s Milanese years, and in particular, the Ambrosiana collection. Jones provides a complete inventory of Borromeo’s collection which clearly underscores Borromeo’s taste for not only Lombard artists, but also Lombard style and themes (such as still-lifes and landscapes). See Pamela M. Jones, Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana; Jones, “Bernardino Luini’s Magdalene from the Collection of Federico Borromeo: Religious Contemplation and Iconographic Sources,” Studies in the History of Art 24 (1990): 67-72; Jones, “Defining the Canonical
is centered on Rome, discussions on Borromeo’s collection at the Ambrosiana, Milan, have been limited only to cursory references. It is important, however, to note that seventy-two percent of Borromeo’s collection comprised works by North Italian artists, which under the broadest scope, were considered to be Lombard, or who worked in the Lombard manner.

During his extended sojourn in Rome (1586-1601), Borromeo lived near Del Monte, and was a friend of the Giustiniani (also protectors and collectors of Caravaggio’s works). Borromeo had even lived in the Palazzo Giustiniani alle Cappelle (owned by Cardinal Vincenzo’s brother) for a short period in 1597. Del Monte, Borromeo, the Giustiniani, and the Mattei (also patrons of Caravaggio), furthermore, were all closely associated with the Oratorian orbit. In the last decade of the Cinquecento into the Seicento, this group of patrons, most of them cardinals who were closely connected with Paleotti, commissioned, promulgated, and disseminated a taste for the “natural” in art, and in particular, the quotidian style of Caravaggio.

Del Monte’s partnership with Paleotti as co-cardinal-protectors of the Accademia di San Luca in 1595, in fact, coincided with Caravaggio’s arrival at the Palazzo Madama. It has long been argued that Caravaggio was not a member of the Accademia di San Luca. In 1995, however, Sergio Rossi suggested that Caravaggio was indeed part of the


103 Langdon, Caravaggio, 102
Rossi proposed that Michele Milanese inscribed in the *Libro degli introiti* of the Accademia, in fact, referred to Caravaggio. Halina Waga’s study on the Compagnia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon further supports Rossi’s claim. Waga discovered Caravaggio’s name on a list of one-hundred-five artists, who were members of not only the Compagnia dei Virtuosi, but also the Accademia di San Luca. These artists participated in the Devotions of the Forty Hours in 1595 and 1596, a ceremony that was particularly important for Pope Clement VIII. Waga’s and Rossi’s discoveries seem to substantiate with sufficient certainty that Caravaggio was a member of the Accademia di San Luca, or at the very least, was involved with the institution in some capacity. Any reservations on this point can be allayed when one considers that Caravaggio’s patron and protector, with whom he was living in 1595 assumed the role as co-cardinal-protector of the Accademia. The Cavaliere d’Arpino, in whose workshop Caravaggio worked shortly after his arrival in Rome, and his friend, Prospero Orsi, were also members of the Accademia. It is thus likely that Caravaggio was a member, and that he came into direct contact with Paleotti and his ideas at this time too. Moreover, in his study on Cardinal Del Monte, Ważbiński claimed that Del Monte probably owned a copy of Paleotti’s

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105 Ibid.

Unfortunately, many of the books in the cardinal’s inventory were not named. Del Monte’s close association with Paleotti, however, adds to the likelihood that Caravaggio was familiar with Paleotti’s ideas.

Caravaggio’s suggested familiarity with Paleotti’s ideas is made even more compelling when we consider the decisive shift in the artist’s style after his entry into Cardinal Del Monte’s household. Caravaggio’s early secular paintings already demonstrated his utilization of naturalism and tenebrism (Figs. 96, 97), yet his early religious narratives do not. The Ecstasy of St. Francis (Fig. 76), the Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Fig. 77), and the Sacrifice of Isaac (Fig. 98, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) include lush landscapes infused with warm light and pre-date or date early in Caravaggio’s association with Cardinal Del Monte. Caravaggio entered the cardinal’s household in 1595. It is only at the turn of the seventeenth century with Caravaggio’s first public commissions for the Contarelli and Cerasi Chapels that we find his signature tenebrism, and unidealized, naturalistic figures appearing together in religious narratives. This convergence of dates and style cannot be coincidental. It seems certain that Caravaggio had the means and opportunity to acquaint himself with Paleotti’s ideas through Cardinal Del Monte and his circle before Cardinal Paleotti’s death in 1597.

Del Monte’s (and Paleotti’s) circle of friends included other collectors (Borromeo, and the Giustiniani and the Mattei, who will be discussed in this chapter),

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107 Waźbiński, Il Cardinale Francesco Maria Del Monte, vol. 2, 411; This is conjecture as many of the books listed in Del Monte’s inventory are without authors or titles; however, it seems unlikely that Del Monte, who served as cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca with Paleotti, would not have owned a copy.
scientists (Johann Faber and Galileo) and important high-ranking church officials such as Cardinal Alessandro Montalto (nephew of Sixtus V). Del Monte was also a friend of the Crescenzi family, and the executor of Virgilio Crescenzi’s will in 1592. Virgilio himself was the executor of Matteo Contarelli’s will (succeeded by his son Abate Giacomo Crescenzi), which may explain Baglione’s claim that Caravaggio received the commission for the Contarelli Chapel through the assistance and support of Del Monte. Del Monte’s friendship with the Crescenzi, however, may have had no bearing on Caravaggio’s involvement with the Contarelli commission. After the work for the chapel dragged on for a number of years, Pope Clement VIII removed the Crescenzi as executors, and placed the direction of the chapel decoration under the Congregazione della Fabbrica di San Pietro.

Del Monte’s and Paleotti’s circle of associates and friends were also Caravaggio’s most important Roman patrons. Across the street from the Del Monte’s Palazzo

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111 Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, 93.

Madama was the palazzo Giustiniani. Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani (1564-1637), a wealthy banker, and his brother Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani (1554-1621) lived in the Palazzo. It was Vincenzo who bought Caravaggio’s first version of the *Inspiration of St. Matthew* (Fig. 66) after it was rejected by the Fathers of San Luigi dei Francesi. In her two-part article on Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, Silvia Danesi Squarzina isolated Benedetto’s acquisitions from those of his brother, Vincenzo, a distinction made possible by the discovery of two early inventories of the cardinal, the “Entrata della Guardarobba.”

Squarzina’s studies have made clear that Vincenzo was not the only Giustiniani who favored Caravaggio’s works. The works of Caravaggio owned by the Giustiniani included: 1. the aforementioned first version of the *Inspiration of St. Matthew* (Fig. 66); 2. *The Lute Player* (Fig. 99, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg); 3. *Filide* (Fig. 113).

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114 Squarzina, *Caravaggio e i Giustiniani*, 274; *Roma, collezione del marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani* (inv. 1638, II, n.8). Both Baglione and Bellori also mentioned that the rejected altarpiece was acquired by Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani. See Baglione, *Vite*, 137; and Bellori, *Vite*, trans. Wohl, 181.

115 Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 10.1, 50. Listed in the February 9, 1638 inventory of paintings in the collection of Vincenzo Giustiniani. “In the large room of old paintings . . . A painting above the door with a half-length figure of a youth playing a lute with various fruits and flowers and music books, painted on canvas, 4 palmi high, and 5 palmi long – with a carved gilt frame by the hand of Michelangelo da Caravaggio.” Baglione identifies this painting with one owned by Cardinal Del Monte. This may just be an error, however, it may suggest that the painting was once owned by Del Monte and was either given to Giustiniani as a gift or sold to him. See Baglione, *Vite*, 136: “. . . e dipinse per il Cardinale […] un giovane, che sonava il Lauta, che vivo, e vero il tutto parea con una caraffa di fiori piena d’acqua, che dentro il riflesso d’una finestra eccellentemente si scorgeva con altri ripercotimenti di quella camera dentro l’acqua, e
100, formerly Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, destroyed); 4. *Amor Victorious* (Fig. 101, Staatliche Museen Berlin); 5. *Incredulity of St. Thomas* (Fig. 102, Sanssouci, Potsdam); 6. *Crowning with Thorns* (Fig. 103, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna); 7. a now lost *Portrait of Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani*; 8. an *Agony in the Garden* (Fig. 104, formerly Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin, destroyed); 9. a lost *Penitent Magdalene in the Garden*; 10. and the *Penitent St. Jerome* (Fig. 105, Museo de

sopra quei fiori eravi una viva rugiada con ogni esquisita diligenza finite. E questo (disse) che fu il più bel pezzo, che facesse mai.”


117 Ibid., 278; *Roma, collezione del marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani* (inv. 1638, II, n. 10). Baglione, and Bellori also mentioned that this work was painted for Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani. See Baglione, *Vite*, 137; and Bellori, *Vite*, trans. Wohl, 182.

118 Ibid., 288; *Roma, collezione del marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani* (inv. 1638, II, n. 3).

119 Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 38, 175. Listed in the inventory of paintings in the collection of Vincenzo Giustiniani: “An over-door painting of the *Crowning with Thorns* of Our Lord, four half figures painted on canvas 5 palmi high by 7 long – by Michelang.o da Caravaggio with a carved gilt frame.” Bellori mentioned the *Crowning with Thorns* that was commissioned by Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani: “He continued in the favor of Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, who commissioned some pictures from him: the *Crowning with thorns . . . .” See Bellori, *Vite*, trans. Wohl, 182.


122 Squarzina, *Caravaggio e i Giustiniani*, 294. Listed in Benedetto’s *Guardarobba* list (entry dating before September 1601, no. 81). The painting reappears in the 1621 inventory, and after his death it also appears in Vincenzo’s inventory of 1638.
Montserrat, Barcelona). Of these works, the most compelling and poignant is the *Incredulity of St. Thomas*. Caravaggio isolated Christ and the three apostles against a dark neutral background that is broken only by a single, unseen, raking light coming from the upper left. The figures are tangible and extremely realistic. The viewer can sense the astonishment of St. Thomas as he, at that instantaneous moment, receives the proof of Christ’s Resurrection. His eyes are open wide in wonderment, as his fingers have already penetrated the wound in Christ’s side. As Paleotti had indicated in his *Discorso*, a painting cannot reach the common man if it fails to delight the senses and stimulate the emotions. Here, St. Thomas’s fingers can be likened to the viewer’s eyes; as the Doubting Thomas could not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ without touching his wounds, the Christian viewer cannot believe or emotionally connect with painted figures or scenes that cannot be tangibly perceived. Caravaggio’s sacred style remedies such deficiencies. Thomas receives his proof through the sense of touch, the viewers through their sense of sight.

The Giustiniani collection, as in Del Monte’s, included numerous works that point toward a taste for naturalistic art. Among the collections of Cardinal Benedetto and Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani we find works by the Lombard artists, Gaudenzio

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124 See Chapter 2, pp. 39-41.
Ferrari, and Garofalo. The Giustiniani also owned many works by artists who practiced a Lombard style in painting, in some cases partly through the influence of Caravaggio; these included, Scipione Pulzone, Lodovico Cigoli, and the Cavaliere d’Arpino. As in the respective collections of Cardinal Federico Borromeo and Cardinal


126 Ibid., 779, 784 *Entrata della Guardarobba of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1600* [ASR, Fondo Giustiniani, busta 15 (Volume 14A, parte IV), fol. 102r]: “Un quadro piccolo in rame della Vergine con Cristo in collo, S. Giovanni, S. Gioseppe, con cornice d’ebano;” Post mortem inventory of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1621 [ASR, Notai del tribunale AC, uff. 8, Vol. 1302, Rainaldo Buratti, fols. 1355r, 1359v]: “Un quadro della Madona, in tavola, con cornice di noce e molte figure piccolo,” “Quadro in tavola dello sposalizio di San Gioseppe con la Madona, con molte figure in piccolo.”

127 Ibid., 781. *Entrata della Guardarobba of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1600* [ASR, Fondo Giustiniani, busta 15 (Volume 14A, parte IV), fol. 103v]: “Un quadretto mezzano in tela di S. Vincenzo con un libro in mano, con cornice negre profilate di bianco;” Post mortem inventory of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1621 [ASR, Notai del tribunale AC, uff. 8, Vol. 1302, Rainaldo Buratti, fols. 1353v, 1355r]: “Un quarto piccolo de retracto de un papa, con cornice e bandinelle, usate,” “Una Madonna con nostro Signore che dorme e San Giovanni pucto, in tavola, con cornice indurate.”

128 Ibid., 779. *Entrata della Guardarobba of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1600* [ASR, Fondo Giustiniani, busta 15 (Volume 14A, parte IV), “Un quadro grande in tela con Cristo spogliato da doi angeli e S. Giovanni Battista, che lo battezza, con cornice nere tonde d’oro e sua bandinella, berrettina, con cordoni e fiocchi di seta.” fol. 102v]: “Un quadro grande in tela con Cristo spogliato da doi angeli e S. Giovanni Battista, che lo battezza, con cornice nere tonde d’oro e sua bandinella, berrettina, con cordoni e fiocchi di seta.”

129 Ibid., 788. *Post mortem inventory of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1621* [ASR, Notai del tribunale AC, uff. 8, Vol. 1302, Rainaldo Buratti, fol. 1403r]: “Un quadro alto palmi dui in circa con le figie di nostro Signore, con cornice negre.”
Del Monte, the Giustiniani also owned many works by Jan Brueghel the Elder.\footnote{Squarzina, “The Collections of Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, Part I,” 781. \textit{Entrata della Guardarobba of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1600 [ASR, Fondo Giustiniani, busta 15 (Volume 14A, parte IV), fols. 104v, 105r, 105v]}: “Un quadretto in rame dell’Adorazione de Magi, con molte figure piccolo e paesini, di mano di Brugo, con le sue cornice d’ebano,” “Un quadro simile in rame del Incendio di Troia,” “Doi quadric di rame di mano di Brugo con cornice di ebbano uno del Giuditio et uno del diluio, compagni e simili alli doi scriti di sopra della doratione di magi et del Incendio di Troia,” “Doi quadretti in rame con cornice di ebbano di mano di Brugo, uno del Paradiso e l’altro del Inferno, con molte figure della grandeza delli quarto scriti di sopra.”}

Numerous works by recognized Caravaggisti also appear in the Giustiniani inventories, such as: Valentin de Boulogne,\footnote{Ibid., 318. Bartolomeo Manfredi’s \textit{Christ Appearing to the Virgin} is listed in the 1638 inventory of Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani. Mancini described Manfredi as a painter who “convener nella maniera del Caravaggio . . . e veduto il colorito del Caravaggio.” See Mancini, \textit{Considerazioni sulla pittura}, 251. Baglione’s assessment of Manfredi’s style is in concert with Mancini’s. According to Baglione, Manfredi “fatto grande si diede ad imitare la maniera di Michelagnolo di Caravaggio, & arrivò a tal segno, che molte opera sue furono tenute di mano di Michelagnolo, e infini gli stessi pittori, in giudicarle, s’ingannavano.” See Baglione, \textit{Vite}, 158. Bellori claimed that Manfredi “was not a mere imitator but transformed himself into Caravaggio, and when he painted it seemed as though he were looking at nature through that man’s eyes.” See Bellori, \textit{Vite}, trans. Wohl, 186.} Barotolomeo Manfredi,\footnote{Squarzina, Caravaggio e i Giustiniani, 334. A \textit{Holy Family with St. John the Baptist} by Valentin de Boulogne is listed on a 1638 inventory of Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani. According to Baglione, Valentin de Boulogne “andava imitando lo stile di Michelagnolo da Caravaggio, dal natural ritrahendo.” See Baglione, \textit{Vite}, 337.} Giovanni Baglione (Fig. 106),\footnote{Ibid., 373, note 94 above.} Gerrit Von Honthorst,\footnote{Ibid., 786. \textit{Post mortem inventory of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1621[ASR, Notai del tribunal AC, uff. 8, Vol. 1302, Rainaldo Buratti, fol. 1359v]}: “Un quadro di San Pietro in prigione destato dall’angelo, con cornice indurate,” “Un quadro della caduta del Locifero di mano del Baglione, con cornice negre.” See also p. 174, note 94 above.} and Jusepe de Ribera;\footnote{Squarzina, “The Collections of Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, Part I,” 786. \textit{Post mortem inventory of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1621[ASR, Notai del tribunal AC, uff. 8, Vol. 1302, Rainaldo Buratti, fol. 1359v]}: “Un quadro di San Pietro in prigione destato dall’angelo, con cornice indurate,” “Un quadro della caduta del Locifero di mano del Baglione, con cornice negre.” See also p. 174, note 94 above.} the latter three are artists whose works are also represented in Del Monte’s collection.
When, shortly after Caravaggio completed the two lateral paintings in the Contarelli Chapel, he received another important commission to complete two paintings for the Cerasi Chapel in S. Maria del Popolo, it was Vincenzo Giustiniani who was named the banker of these transactions. The Giustiniani established many strong ecclesiastical connections. Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani was a papal treasurer and Jesuit, and a friend of Cardinal Del Monte, Cardinal Borromeo, Cardinal Girolamo Mattei, Cardinal Alessandro Montalto, Filippo Neri, and his successor, Cesare Baronio. His association with the Oratorians is supported by the fact that among the silver donated (1589) by Pietro Vittrice for his chapel, some bore the coat of arms of Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani. Giustiniani also surely knew Pietro’s nephew, Girolamo, who commissioned Caravaggio’s *Entombment* for his uncle’s chapel, and

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135 Ibid., 328. A *Portrait of a Man* by Jusepe de Ribera appears on the 1638 inventory of Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani; and Squarzina (1997), op. cit., 780, 786, 788. *Entrata della Guardarobba of Benedetto Giustiniani, 1600 [ASR, Fondo Giustiniani, busta 15 (Volume 14A, parte IV), fols. 103r, 1357v, 1402v]: “Un quadro in tela di S. Francesco in oration, con cornice nere profilate di giallo;” “Un quadro di San Iacomo, senza cornice;” “Un quadro senza cornice de Santa Maria Maddalena in ecstasy appoggiata à una testa de morto.” See also p. 175, note 96 above.


138 Barbieri, Barchiesi, and Ferrara, *Santa Maria in Vallicella*, 64.
Tiberio Cerasi, who commissioned Caravaggio’s *Crucifixion of St. Peter* and *Conversion of St. Paul*. Moreover, between 1596 and 1597, Cardinal Benedetto, through the support of Cardinal Baronio, endorsed the entry of his young relative, Fabiano Giustiniani, into the Congregation of the Oratory (Oratorians).

Upon leaving Del Monte’s Palazzo, Caravaggio took up residence in the Palazzo Mattei (1600-02) under the support of the brothers Ciriaco (d. 1614), Cardinal Girolamo (1547-1603), and Asdrubale Mattei (1556-1638). The Mattei were also close friends of Del Monte and the Giustiniani family. Cardinal Mattei had been part of a special commission of five cardinals responsible for overseeing and enforcing the decrees of the Council of Trent. Creighton Gilbert’s 1995 book entitled *Caravaggio and his Two Cardinals* concentrates on two of Caravaggio’s major Cardinal patrons: Cardinal Del Monte and Cardinal Girolamo Mattei. Gilbert’s chapters on the Mattei are particularly noteworthy, as he suggested the difficulty in crediting Ciriaco Mattei with the commissioning of works in the collection and for chapel and palace decoration. According to Gilbert, it was typically the lay older brother of a family who handled the

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139 Barbieri, Barchiesi, and Ferrara, *Santa Maria in Vallicella*, 62. Girolamo Vittrice was closely associated with Pope Clement VIII too, serving as his *sostoguardarobba*, and had accompanied the Pope and his court to Ferrara in 1598. See also Langdon, *Caravaggio*, 180; Tiberio Cerasi was also named Treasurer-General under Pope Clement VIII in 1596.

140 Barbieri, Barchiesi, and Ferrara, *Santa Maria in Vallicella*, 64.

141 Langdon, *Caravaggio*, 228.

142 Gilbert, *Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals*, 101.

143 Ibid.
The Mattei collection contained four original works by Caravaggio: 1. *Supper at Emmaus* (Fig. 107, National Gallery of Art, London); \(^{145}\) 2. *Taking of Christ* (Fig. 108, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin); \(^{146}\) 3. *St. John the Baptist* (Fig. 92); \(^{147}\) 4. a St. Cappelletti and Testa, *Il Trattenimento*. 

\(^{144}\) Cappelletti and Testa, *Il Trattenimento*. 

\(^{145}\) Ibid., 139. The account registry of Ciriaco Mattei indicates a payment of 150 scudi was given to Caravaggio on January 7, 1602. Baglione attributed the commission of the *Supper at Emmaus* to Ciriaco Mattei: “Anzi fe cadere al romore anche il Signor Ciriaco Matthei, e cui il Caravaggio havea dipinto […] quando N. Signore andò in Emmaus…” See Baglione, *Vite*, 142. The work was later acquired by Cardinal Scipione Borghese as it appears in an April 7, 1693 inventory of Palazzo Borghese in Campo Marzio, Rome. See Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 25, 115. 

\(^{146}\) Cappelletti and Testa, *Il Trattenimento*, 140. The account registry of Ciriaco Mattei indicates a payment of 125 scudi was given to Caravaggio on January 2, 1603. Bellori, however, attributes the commission to Asdrubale Mattei: “. . . Marchese Asdrubale Mattei commissioned him [Caravaggio] to paint the Taking of Christ in the garden, likewise with half-length figures.” See Bellori, *Vite*, trans. Wohl, 182. 

\(^{147}\) Cappelletti and Testa, *Il Trattenimento*, 105-106, 139-40; The *St. John the Baptist* may be among the two unspecified payments given Caravaggio for 60 scudi on June 26, 1602 and for 25 scudi on December 5, 1602. According to the testament of
Sebastian (lost). The Taking of Christ is counted among the most powerful, as well as most intriguing works of Caravaggio during his Roman period. It is the only work in which Caravaggio incorporated two sources of light: one external, the other internal. Caravaggio utilized his traditional raking light, which strikes the figures from an unseen source at the upper left, but he also included an internal light source, the lantern, held by the figure at the far right edge of the canvas. Roberto Longhi was the first to recognize this figure as a self-portrait of the artist (Fig. 109), an identification that has met with general agreement among Caravaggio scholars. Here, the artist holds up the lantern to see the betrayal with his own eyes. Like the apostles at the Last Supper who cannot believe that one among them will betray Christ, this figure (Caravaggio) needs empirical proof that Judas was the betrayer. The figures are all rendered tangibly and naturalistically, so much so, that as John Spike commented, the scene has the “realism of a police documentary.” The figures are projected into powerful relief, visually arresting the eyes of the viewer.

The Mattei family’s collections share another common denominator with the collections of their friends and fellow Roman art enthusiasts, Cardinal Francesco Maria Ciriaco’s oldest son, Giovanni Battista Mattei dated January 21, 1624, the painting was left to Cardinal Del Monte “my lord and patron.”

148 Cappelletti and Testa, Il Trattentimento, 100. Listed in the “Inventario della Guardarobba” of Asdrubale Mattei, 1604.  
150 Spike, Caravaggio, 131.
Del Monte and Cardinal Benedetto and Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, in terms of the
artists and styles of their works. The “Lombard” artists whose works may be found in the
Mattei collections include Muziano\textsuperscript{151} and Antiveduto Grammatica.\textsuperscript{152} Works by Scipione
Pulzone,\textsuperscript{153} and the northern landscape specialist, Paul Bril,\textsuperscript{154} and several works by
Caravaggisti, such as Carlo Saraceni,\textsuperscript{155} and Giovanni Serodine (Fig. 110),\textsuperscript{156} are also
present in the Mattei collections.

All three Mattei brothers are linked to key figures and institutions in Rome during
the last decades of the Cinquecento and into the Seicento. Girolamo Mattei was elevated

\textsuperscript{151} Cappelletti and Testa, \textit{Il Trattenimento}, 159-60. Among the works by Muziano
that appears in the inventories of the Mattei include: \textit{Lazzaro e il ricco Epubone, Cattura
di Cristo, S. Francesco, S. Girolamo, Diluvio Universale, S. Antonio Eremita, S. Matteo.
The Mattei (probably Cardinal Girolamo or Ciriaco) commissioned Muziano to paint the
frescoes of the Life of St. Matthew in the Mattei Chapel in S. Maria in Aracoeli (1586-
1589).

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid. Two works by Antiveduto Grammatica that appear in the inventories are
the \textit{Disputa di Gesù con i dottori}, and the \textit{Cristo portacroce}.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., Two works by Scipione Pulzone, a \textit{Maddalena}, and a \textit{Madonna}, appear
in the Mattei inventories.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 98. In March 1601, Asdrubale Mattei commissioned five painting from
Paul Bril, depicting the \textit{Feudi di casa Mattei (Giove, Castel S. Pietro, Rocca, Sinibalda e
Belmonte, Vedute di Giove)} which were intended for the entrance salon of the Palazzo
Mattei alle Botteghe Oscure. Two more \textit{vedute} may have been commissioned later.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 42. Ciriaco Mattei commissioned two paintings from Carlo Saraceni:
\textit{N.S.re Giesu Cristo scacciò li mercanti dal tempio, Fugo in Egitto}. See also p. 175, note
97 above.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 68, 159-60. Serodine’s \textit{Il Tributo della moneta, S. Pietro e S. Paolo
condotti al martirio, and Disputa di Gesù con i dottori} were commissioned by Asdrubale
Mattei for the Galleria of the Palazzo Mattei, Giove. In his \textit{Vite} of Giovanni Serodine,
Baglione proclaimed that Serodine “voleva imitare la maniera di Michelagnolo Amerigi
da Caravaggio, con il ritrarre dal naturale, ma senza disegno, e con poco decoro.” See
Baglione, \textit{Vite}, 311.
to the cardinalate, along with Benedetto Giustiniani, in 1586 by Pope Sixtus V. In 1588, Cardinal Mattei was named Cardinal Protector of the observant Franciscans by Pope Sixtus V. During the reign of Pope Sixtus V, Cardinal Mattei was also appointed to a commission of five cardinals charged with assessing and reinforcing the implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent. Under the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII, Cardinal Mattei was assigned to the commission in charge of the compilation of the Settimo delle Decretali with Cardinal Domenico Pinelli, Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, and Cardinal Ascanio Colonna. The Mattei brothers were also close to Filippo Neri and the Oratorian circle. According to a testimony submitted for the beatification of Filippo Neri, the future saint often stopped at Ciriaco Mattei’s Villa della Navicella while pilgrimaging to the seven churches. The close association between Ciriaco and Filippo


158 Gilbert, Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals, 101.

159 Ibid.

160 Cappelletti and Testa, Il Trattenimento, 13.

161 According to the second deposition of Domenico Giordani (a Roman priest) dated Friday 24 November 1595: “... et si comunicavano quasi tutti quelli che andavano alle Sette Chiese: che, alle volte, mille, alle volte, doi milla, et quando più, et quando manco; et quando si sapeva che l’ p. Filippo andava alle Chiese, tutti correvano. Di poi si faceva un sermone, li in S. Sebastiano, et in tutte le altre chiese delle Sette Chiese, da vari religiosi... Et, in questa andata alle Sette Chiese, si convertivano molte gente et si faceva un gran frutto per le anime. La refettione si faceva in vari luoghi, alla vigna de Matthei, a S. Stefano rotondo, a S. Croce, et altri luoghi...”; See Il primo processo per San Filippo Lippi nel Codice Vaticano Latino 3798 e in altri esemplari dell’archivio dell’Oratorio di Roma, vol. 1, Testimonianze dell’inchiesta romana:1595, ed. Giovanni Incisa della Rocchetta and Nello Vian, Studi e Testi 191 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1957), 385.
Neri is further substantiated by the fact that a painting by Prospero Orsi, depicting *Filippo Neri and Carlo Borromeo*, hung in Ciriaco’s chapel in his palazzo.\(^\text{162}\) Ciriaco was also a member of several important lay confraternities, and had a close relationship with the Franciscan order, of which his brother, Cardinal Girolamo Mattei, was protector.\(^\text{163}\) The third Mattei brother, Asdrubale, was, like his brothers, a patron and collector of art. Asdrubale, however, has the distinction of being associated with the newly founded Accademia di San Luca. Asdrubale Mattei’s name appears on a list of *signori e gentilhuomini amatori* in Romano Alberti’s *Origine*.\(^\text{164}\) His name not only appears on this list, but it appears at the very top. As the list is not organized alphabetically, it is easy to conclude that he played an important role. Alberti’s *Origine* recorded only the first year of activity at the Accademia, thus making it relatively certain that Asdrubale was acquainted with both Cardinal Federico Borromeo and Cardinal Paleotti. The Matteis thus not only were protectors and patrons of Caravaggio, and collectors of naturalistic paintings, but they had important links to key cardinals, the Oratorians, and the Accademia di San Luca, all of whom had close ties to Paleotti.

Pope Clement VIII does not appear to have been a collector of art or patron of Caravaggio, however, his nephew, Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, not only played a key

\(^{162}\) Cappelletti and Testa, *Il Trattenimento*, 36, 143. The account registry of Ciriaco Mattei indicates that a payment of 15 scudi was made to Prospero Orsi on 3 February 1614: “Adi 3 febraro 1614 e pui deve havere schudi quindi di monita p. tanti pagati a ms Prospero Orsi p. il prezzo di un San Carlo ed Beato Filippo compro da lui sc.15.” Orsi was among the *valenthuomini* named by Caravaggio in the libel suit Baglione brought against him in 1603.

\(^{163}\) Ibid.

\(^{164}\) Alberti, *Origine*. 

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role in the court of his uncle, but he was also an avid collector of art. Pietro too was among the many cardinals who frequented the Vallicella and had close friendships with Neri and other Oratorians. A large portion of the paintings in his collection (about two hundred fifty) were acquired after his successful negotiations to transfer Ferrara to the Holy See. Following the death of her husband, the Duke of Urbino Francesco Maria II Della Rovere in 1598, Lucrezia d’Este nominated Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini as universal heir. Pope Clement VIII and his nephew made several visits to Ferrara and the environs, and among those who accompanied the Pope and the cardinal-nephew in 1598 were: Cardinals Federico Borromeo, Francesco Maria Del Monte, Benedetto Giustiniani, Girolamo Mattei, Maffeo Barberini, Jacopo Sannesio, all of whom owned several works by Caravaggio; even Girolamo Vittrice, the Pope’s sottoguardarobba, had commissioned Caravaggio to paint the altarpiece of the *Entombment* for his uncle’s chapel in the Chiesa Nuova; the Oratorian Cardinal Cesare Baronio; and Monsignor Giovanni Battista Agucchi, Cardinal Aldobrandini’s personal secretary. Agucchi, an

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165 Von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 23, 50. He shared the position of Secretary of State with his cousin, Cardinal Cinzio Passeri Aldobrandini.

166 Cardella, *Memorie Storiche*, vol. 6, 11.


advocate of the Carracci who would later pen his *Trattato della Pittura* (1607-15), surely contributed in forming Pietro’s taste for naturalistic art.

The objects painted and imitated directly from nature are pleasing to the common people, since they are accustomed to seeing such things, and the imitation of what they already know well delights them. But the knowledgeable man, lifting his thought to the Idea of the beautiful, to the concept that Nature demonstrated she wished to make, is enraptured by it and contemplates it as a thing divine.\(^{169}\)

The first line of this excerpt taken from Agucchi’s *Trattato* reveals not merely his appreciation for naturalistic painting, but his consensus with Paleotti, that the imitation of nature was pleasing, and thus a necessary step to reach the common man. The closing of this passage, on the other hand, uncovers Agucchi’s more classicizing, intellectual taste, which explains the laudatory praise he gives to the Carracci in the same *Trattato*.

Agucchi, however, did manage to give some praise to Caravaggio, whom he proclaimed was “most excellent in coloring.”\(^{170}\) Two paintings by Caravaggio, in fact, have been linked to Cardinal Aldobrandini’s patronage. Caravaggio’s *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (Fig. 77) is believed to be the work cited in the 1611 inventory of Olimpia Aldobrandini, Cardinal Pietro’s niece and a friend of Cardinal Del Monte.\(^{171}\) It has been

\(^{169}\) Enggass and Brown, *Italian and Spanish Art*, 27.

\(^{170}\) Agucchi, “*Trattato della Pittura,*” 257.

\(^{171}\) Spike, *Caravaggio*, 76, and Catalogue 17, 80. Listed in the 1611 inventory of Olimpia Aldobrandini without reference to the artist: “A large painting of the Madonna’s Flight into Egypt in a frame with touches of gold and stars on the corners.” Olimpia married Camillo Pamphili in 1647. The same work seems to be referenced in the 1652 inventory of the Guardaroba of Prince Camillo Pamphili: “A painting on canvas with the flight of the Madonna and St. Joseph in Egypt with a child in arms, with an Angel from the back, who sings and plays the violin, figures life-size by Michel’Angelo da
speculated, however, that Pietro was the original patron of the work and may have been given to his niece as a gift. This would explain the presence of a copy in the 1622 inventory of paintings in Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini’s Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati: “A large painting on canvas of a Madonna embracing the child and a St. Joseph without frame, copy of Caravaggio.”

Regardless of the questions surrounding its provenance, this early work of Caravaggio, although not exhibiting his signature tenebrism, is still naturalistic and is well in-line with the other paintings in Pietro’s collection, as well as his interest in music. The *Penitent Magdalene* (Fig. 59) by Caravaggio is another work that has been connected with a work listed in the inventory of Olimpia Aldobrandini, and may also have been originally commissioned by Pietro, although there is no consensus among scholars.

Other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who collected works by Caravaggio included Monsignor Massimo Massimi, who owned the *Crowning with Thorns* (Fig. 111, Caravaggio with a beautiful landscape, 6 palmi high by 7 long, in a gold frame decorated with the pater noster motif.” This work is today in the Galleria Doria Pamphili, Rome.

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173 Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 16, 77. Listed in the 1626 inventory of Olimpia Aldobrandini, Rome, again without reference to the artist: “n. 197 a large painting of the Magdalen in a gold frame.” This work, however, appears to have been passed down to the Pamphili family too, where it is listed in the inventory of the Guardaroba of Prince Camillo Pamphili, Rome (again without artist), and in a 1706 inventory of the Pamphili collection, Rome, still without reference to the artist, but with a notation that the frame bore the arms of Pietro Aldobrandini. This work is today also in the Galleria Doria Pamphili, Rome.
Cardinal Jacopo Sannesio acquired the first versions of the Cerasi laterals, the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* and the *Conversion of St. Paul* (Fig. 75).\(^{176}\) Cardinal Maffeo Barberini (future Pope Urban VIII) owned Caravaggio’s *Sacrifice of Isaac* (Fig. 98),\(^{177}\) and the *Portrait of Maffeo Barberini* (Fig. 113, Private Collection, Florence).\(^{178}\) Cardinal Scipione Borghese

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\(^{175}\) Amidei, “Della committenza Massimo,” 47-51. Amidei connects the *Ecce Homo* with the painting of unnamed subject commissioned from Caravaggio by Cardinal Massimo Massimi, as indicated in the document of June 25, 1605 in Caravaggio’s hand cited above in note 174.

\(^{176}\) Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 23, 105. This supposed first version of one of the Cerasi Chapel laterals has been connected to the work of an unnamed artist cited in the February 19, 1644 inventory of Francesco Sannesio, Rome (heir to Cardinal Jacopo): “Two large paintings that represent a St. Peter crucified and the other the conversion of Saint Paul, gilt frames.”

\(^{177}\) Ibid., Catalogue 34, 161. This work has been connected to a work of an unnamed artist listed in the December 7, 1608 inventory of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini in the house of Marchese Salviati, via dei Penitenzieri, Rome: “A painting of Abraham in a black frame.” Bellori cited this work in his *Life of Caravaggio* as a commission from Cardinal Maffeo Barberini. See Bellori, *Vite*, trans. Wohl, 182: “For Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who later became the supreme pontiff Urban VIII […] he painted Abraham’s sacrifice, in which he holds the blade at the throat of his son, who cries out and falls.”

purchased the rejected *Madonna dei Palafrenieri* (Fig. 85),\(^{179}\) obtained the Mattei *Supper at Emmaus* (Fig. 107),\(^{180}\) and owned *St. Jerome Writing* (Fig. 114, Galleria Borghese, Rome).\(^{181}\)

In addition to these cardinal-patrons, several lay individuals became patrons of Caravaggio and were part of the circle surrounding Cardinal Del Monte. Pietro Vittrice owned Caravaggio’s Paris *Gypsy Fortune Teller* (Fig. 115, Musée du Louvre, Paris) and was probably responsible for bringing the artist to the attention of his nephew and heir, Girolamo Vittrice, who in 1602 commissioned Caravaggio to paint the altarpiece of the *Entombment* for the Chiesa Nuova (Fig. 78).\(^{182}\) Pietro moved within the same circles as Del Monte, Giustiniani and Mattei. He held the honor of being Gregory XIII’s Master of the Wardrobe and has been identified as a close follower of Filippo Neri who shared

\(^{179}\) Spike, *Caravaggio*, Catalogue 48, 209-10. After the rejection of the altarpiece, it was acquired by Cardinal Scipione Borghese as indicated in a document of June 16, 1606.

\(^{180}\) Ibid., Catalogue 25, 115. Although this work appears to have been commissioned by Ciriaco Mattei, at some point (probably before 1616) it is acquired by Cardinal Scipione Borghese. The *Supper at Emmaus* is listed in an April 7, 1693 inventory of the Palazzo Borghese in Campo Marzio, Rome: “Room v, n.28: . . . a large painting with the Supper at Emmaus in canvas n. 1, with a carved and gilt frame by Caravaggio. See p. 188, note 145 above.

\(^{181}\) Ibid., Catalogue 49, 215. Listed in the April 7, 1693 inventory of Palazzo Borghese, in Campo Marzio: “No. 43 Above the door under the large cornice a large painting on canvas with St. Jerome writing with a skull, n. 316, gilt frame by Caravaggi.” Bellori mentioned a *St. Jerome writing* by Caravaggio which was painted for Cardinal Borghese. See Bellori, *Vite*, 182: “For the same cardinal [Borghese] he painted Saint Jerome, reaching out his hand and pen to the inkwell while writing attentively.”

similar ideals of simplicity and humility. Laerzio Cherubini, who commissioned the
Death of the Virgin (Fig. 86) from Caravaggio, lived in the region of Sant’ Eustachio
where both the Giustiniani and Crescenzi also resided. He was a close friend of both
Vincenzo Giustiniani, who was named to be the judge of the painting’s (Death of the
Virgin) monetary value, and Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, who was the current
protector of the Monastery of Casa Pia (to which Santa Maria della Scala was closely
associated). The papal banker Ottavio Costa owned the Martha and Mary Magdalene
(Fig. 116, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit), Judith and Holofernes (Fig. 117, Galleria
Nazionale d’Arte Antica, Rome), and the St. John the Baptist (Fig. 118, Nelson-Atkins
Museum of Art, Kansas City). Costa was also a member of the SS. Trinità dei
Pellegrini, which also put him into contact with fellow members Marchese Vincenzo
Giustiniani, Ciriaco Mattei, Cardinal Girolamo Mattei, and Ermette Cavalletti (for whom
Caravaggio painted the Madonna di Loreto in Sant’Agostino).

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183 Langdon, Caravaggio, 242.

184 Spike, Caravaggio, Catalogue 21, 93. This work has been connected with that
mentioned in the August 6, 1606 Testament of Ottavio Costa, although there is no
consensus among scholars.

185 Ibid., Catalogue 19, 85. A painting of Judith is mentioned in the February 7,
1632 Testament of Ottavio Costa. Baglione does mention that Caravaggio painted a
“Giuditta, che taglia la testa ad Oloferne per il Signori Costi.” See Baglione, Vite, 138.

186 Spike, Caravaggio, Catalogue 39, 178. Listed in the January 18-24, 1639
inventory of the Ottavio Costa: “And another painting with the image of St. John the
Baptist in the desert made by the same Caravaggio.”

187 Jones, Altarpieces and Their Viewers, 79. The SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini was an
organization that cared for the poor pilgrims in Rome during the Jubilee years.
The circle surrounding Cardinal Paleotti included a complex web of friends, associates, and collectors who were steeped in the Counter-Reformation climate of Rome. The Oratorians, the Jesuits, the SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini, with which many of these key cardinal-patrons were associated, played a central role in not only catering to pilgrims, but to the caring and nurturing of the poor, illiterate common Roman populace. Their responsibility in reaching the common man was tightly linked to Paleotti’s ideas on sacred art, in particular, his “theology of nature.” In his 1582 Discorso, Paleotti made a strong case for sacred art as a reflection of God’s creation, of in essence, everyday life. According to Paleotti, it was necessary to delight the eyes of the populace. In order to do so, the painter must keenly imitate the truth, which deceives the eyes with its semblance.\textsuperscript{188} Paleotti’s position at the Accademia di San Luca, moreover, cannot be insignificant when considering that many of the artists whose works found their way into collections of key cardinal-patrons and patrons were members of the Accademia di San Luca or at the very least associated with it. The artists/Accademia members represented in the above discussed collections of cardinal-patrons include Scipione Pulzone,\textsuperscript{189} Paul Bril,\textsuperscript{190} Prospero Orsi,\textsuperscript{191} the Cavaliere d’Arpino (principe of the Accademia, 1599-1600, 278r.

\textsuperscript{188} Paleotti, Discorso, Libro 2, Capitolo 52, “Conclusione di quello che principalmente si giudica necessario, affine che le cose si dipingono, siano da tutti commendata,” 278r.

\textsuperscript{189} See p. 140, note 9 above.

\textsuperscript{190} See Chapter 4, p. 115, note 108.

\textsuperscript{191} ASL, Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625, 34v, 35r, 39v.
1605-1606, 1629-1630), Antiveduto Grammatica, Giovanni Baglione, Guido Reni, Carlo Saraceni, and others. This does not include those artists not discussed in this chapter who were also members of the Accademia di San Luca, such as Cristofano Roncalli, Giovanni de’ Vecchi (principe of the Accademia, 1595-96), Durante Alberti (principe of the Accademia, 1597-98), and Alessandro Turchi (principe of the Accademia, 1636-37), and others. To this list, we cannot definitively exclude Caravaggio, who at the very least was closely associated with many members of the Accademia.

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193 ASL, *Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625*, 18r, 20v, 27r, 28r, 34v, 50v, 143r, 144r, 145v, 168r. Antiveduto Grammatica appears to have served as the Camerlengo of the Accademia di San Luca in 1624.


196 Ibid., 143v.


198 Alberti, *Origine*, 78 and “Pitori Academicì che di mano in mano si sottoscrissero di loro proprio mano, & altri.”

199 Ibid.

200 ASL, *Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625*, 43v, 170r.
The intimate ties between these cardinal-patrons and patrons and the common denominator of the character of their collections, moreover, indicate a cultivation of taste, centering on Caravaggio and Lombard naturalism. Caravaggio’s style heeds the decree on images issued in the final session of the Council of Trent, through its clarity, simplicity, and its affective power. Moreover, his religious imagery perfectly corresponds to Paleotti’s valuation of naturalism and the affective power of paintings as meditative aids; two critical, effective means by which the painter can reach the general populace.

Paleotti, I believe, is a critical figure who has been overlooked in the studies on Caravaggio. Lack of documentation has led to a general rejection and dismissal of Post-Trent theory as determiners of sacred style, and in particular, on the style of Caravaggio. The visual evidence in his works, however, indicates the contrary. Caravaggio’s plebian figures set in religious scenes correlate with Paleotti’s conviction that naturalism served as a bridge between painted subject and Christian viewer. In this capacity, Paleotti’s ideas outlined in his Discorso are instructive to our understanding of Caravaggio’s sacred style. Caravaggio removes the temporal, physical, and psychological distance between painting and viewer, thereby removing the boundaries between past and the present, between heaven and earth, between the divine and the humble Christian poor. Bellori (1672) found fault in the artist’s plebian and tenebrous images, and chastised Caravaggio for not

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201 Caravaggio’s portrait hung at the Accademia, according to Baglione. See Baglione, Vite, 139. This indication alone, suggests that Caravaggio had some involvement at the Accademia and/or his style was respected, although Baglione indicates the contrary. See also pp. 177-79 above.
knowing how to come out of the cellar.\textsuperscript{202} It was, in fact, through the artist’s dark cellars, inhabited by humble, earthly figures that the most unfortunate, illiterate, and poor Christian worshipper could emotionally and spiritually connect with the divine. It was through Caravaggio’s cellar that the general populace could hope to scale the ladder to God. Lombard naturalism had already, by the time of Caravaggio’s arrival in Rome, made its foothold through the works of Muziano, Pulzone, and others. It was the power of Caravaggio’s sacred style, however, that would nurture, reinforce, and spread Lombard naturalism to the Accademia di San Luca, where his innovative conventions will begin appearing in the commissions of its members.

Upon elevation to the papal throne, Pope Clement VIII quickly made preparations to decorate the chapels and churches of Rome for the Jubilee of 1600. His attention was first focused on the decoration of the Vatican Palace, St. Peter’s, and San Giovanni in Laterano, three of the most important symbols of the Church Triumphant and the temporal and spiritual powers of the papacy. In addition to his own projects, which were put under the direction of his favorite artist, Cavaliere D’Arpino (1568-1640), numerous cardinals (many of them close to the Pope and who were given the red hat by Clement) took initiatives to ready their own titular churches in preparation for the Jubilee. The significance of these works stems from two interconnected facts: one, the majority of the artists were members of the Accademia; and second, and most important, the style of the paintings embraced Paleotti’s “theology of nature,” conveyed through the subjects of nature, the application of Lombard conventions of tangible presences, and scenes generally filtered through a naturalistic lens, in order to confront viewers with painted truths that were clear, didactic, and affective.

At the Vatican Palace, Pope Clement VIII employed the services of the brothers Giovanni (1558-1601) and Cherubino Alberti (1553-1615), and Paul Bril (1554-1626).

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1 Alberti, Origine, “Pitori Academici che di mano in mano si sottoscrissero di loro proprio mano, & altri.”

2 Ibid., “Pitori Academici che di mano in mano si sottoscrissero di loro proprio mano, & altri;” ASL, Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625, 3r, 25r, 34v, 35r.

3 See chapter 4, p. 115, note 108.
all of whom were members of the Accademia di San Luca.\footnote{Baldassare Croce may have also collaborated with the Alberti, but he too was a member of the Accademia di San Luca. ASL, \textit{Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625}, 34v, 143v.} In the Sala Clementina (Fig. 119), Giovanni frescoed the vault, Cherubino painted three of the four walls, and the fourth wall was given to Paul Bril.\footnote{Abromson, \textit{Painting in Rome}, 36.} The Alberti brothers were perspective specialists, which is evidenced in the illusionistic fresco in the vault that opens up to the sky. The style of the vault fresco and the Alberti brothers’ style in general, do not fall within a “Lombard” paradigm, although Bril’s fresco does in its subject, and naturalism. Nevertheless, the coherence and rationality of the vault decoration and the consistency of the foreshortening and perspective (there is a single rational viewpoint) are worlds away from the stucco and grotesques typical of maniera taste, and ubiquitous in the Lateran Palace and Vatican Library projects of Pope Sixtus V. The decoration in the Sala Clementina reflects, albeit in a different manner, Paleotti’s emphasis on tangibility and believability. This is a point that Marcello Beltramme found consonant with Paleotti’s \textit{linguaggio commune}.\footnote{Beltramme, “Le teoriche del Paleotti,” 203, 208.} Paleotti’s theories were thus not only applicable for devotional functions, but also for theological and political statements. At the center of the vault, a ring of angels surround the kneeling figure of St. Clement who gazes up at the Trinity. Clearly visible are the papal keys and the tiara emblazoned with the Aldobrandini star held aloft by putti. In the Sala Clementina, there is no ambiguity, but rather we see clear,
delineated spaces and forms, truthfully portrayed through an illusionistic system that connects with the spatial and figural experience of the viewer standing below.

The two long walls are decorated with various devices, including figures of Virtues, angels and Aldobrandini insignias. On one of the short walls is a fresco of the *Baptism of Constantine*, but on the fourth wall is a work of particular interest: Paul Bril’s fresco of the *Martyrdom of St. Clement* (Fig. 120). The martyrdom takes place in a vast naturalistic setting where St. Clement senses God’s presence all around him in the realm of nature, even more so than through the angel with martyr’s palm flying in from the upper right. Landscape figured prominently in previous decorative campaigns, particularly under Pope Gregory XIII, but never on such a monumental scale. The presence of a grand landscape as a setting for St. Clement’s martyrdom is not only truthful and appropriate to the saint’s story (as he was martyred by being tied to an anchor and thrown off a boat), but landscapes and nature-centered subjects were also of interest to theorists and collectors of art. Paleotti’s *Discorso* was replete with references to nature as evidence of God’s hand and divine providence. It is for this very reason that he accepted certain types of profane art, specifically subjects and objects of nature. Nature not only had an instructional or documentary function, but a devotional one as well.⁷ Cardinal Federico Borromeo, Paleotti’s former pupil, held similar convictions. In his 1625 devotional treatise, *I tre libri delle piaceri della mente Christiana*, Borromeo emphasized his belief that the contemplation of nature was a means of connecting to God.

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⁷ Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 2, Capitolo 12, “Abusi delle pitture profane, & se elle christianamente debbono essere admesse,” 130r.
whose presence could be found in all created things. Borromeo’s confidence in nature as a vehicle for meditation and communion with God is manifested in the thirty-five landscapes listed in his inventory; eleven of them were by Paul Bril (Figs. 121, 122). The Mattei also had Bril paint seven vedute in fresco for their Palazzo Mattei alle Botteghe Oscure.

The decorations for the Sala Clementina were completed in late 1599 or early 1600, after which the collaboration between the Alberti and Bril continued in the next room, the Sala del Concistoro. In this room too, the Alberti executed similar illusionistic frescoes as in the Sala Clementina, and Bril frescoed scenes representing famous monasteries in Italy (Fig. 123), where once again naturalistic landscapes dominate. These frescoes in the Vatican Palace were not the only monumental landscapes Bril was commissioned to execute in Rome. Almost concurrent with his work at the Sala Concistoro in the Vatican Palace, Bril was asked to fresco scenes of Saints and Hermits in Landscapes for the corridor of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere by Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato (1560-1618).

Cardinal Sfondrato was extremely devout and lived a life of asceticism. He was closely connected with key cardinals from Paleotti’s circle. Sfondrato was a member of the Congregazione dei Sacri Chiodi in Siena, a congregation whose members also

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9 Abromson, Painting in Rome, 37. Abromson dated the completion of the Sala Clementina through payment documents, the last being on December 6, 1599.

10 Von Pastor, History of the Popes, vol. 24, 520. Von Pastor advises us of an Avviso of July 23, 1597 which indicated that the Cardinal continually fasts and prays.
included Filippo Neri, Cardinal Francesco Maria Tarugi, Cardinal Cesare Baronio, and Cardinal Federico Borromeo. He was intimately connected with the Oratorians in Rome since his youth, when in 1577 his uncle, Niccolò Sfondrato (Pope Gregory XIV, r. 1590-1591), entrusted the seventeen-year-old Paolo Emilio to the care of Neri. He was also friends with Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani to whom he left Sodoma’s *Ecce Homo* according to his testament of 6 August 1615. Cardinal Sfondrato’s titular church was Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, a church that become extremely important to many, including Pope Clement VIII. On October 20, 1599, renovations near the high altar uncovered two sarcophagi with the bones of St. Cecilia, and Sts. Valerian, Tiburtius, and Maximus (who were converted by St. Cecilia and martyred with her). The cardinal himself had opened


12 Profili, “Francesco Vanni,” 65; and Gaetano Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, vol. 65 (Venice: Tipografia Emiliana, 1854), 83-84. According to Moroni, the seventeen-year-old Sfondrato lived at Santa Maria in Vallicella.


14 Von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 24, 520-22. According to Von Pastor, Pope Clement identified the remains based on an inscription of Paschal I in the church. Further excavations would later uncover a third sarcophagus which, from the inscription of Paschal I, contained the remains of Popes Urban and Lucius.
the cover holding what was thought to be St. Cecilia’s remains. The cypress-wood casket was in relatively good condition, and the saint herself was found covered with a silk gauze veil and in the same position in which she was placed in 821 by Paschal I who had transferred the virgin martyr’s body from the catacomb of St. Callixtus. From the discovery of the relics in 1599 onward, the cult of St. Cecilia, and the cult of relics in general, grew to tremendous proportions. The Cardinal’s piety combined with the discovery of St. Cecilia’s relics impelled Sfondrato to begin further renovations and decorations of the church with earnest, including the corridor leading to the second chapel on the right frescoed by Bril ca. 1600.

Bril executed a series of frescoes depicting various saints and hermits in landscapes, which are close in style to his frescoes in the Vatican Palace (Figs. 120, 123), and especially to the *Landscape with Anub* (Fig. 121, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan) and *Landscape with Mutius* (Fig. 122, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan) in the Borromeo collection (which were probably acquired in the late 1590s). The representations Bril frescoed in this corridor include on the right wall, landscapes with *St. Mary of Egypt, St. Mary Magdalene*, and an unidentified saint, and the left, landscapes with *Two Penitent Saints*, and *St Francis*. Above the entrance was a landscape with *St. Hilary*, and in the vault, landscapes with *St. Paul the Hermit, St. Onofrio, St. Jerome* (Fig. 124), and *St.

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16 Ibid., 525. This corridor led to an important sanctuary, where the remains of an ancient Roman bathroom were preserved. This bathroom was believed to be the one in which St. Cecilia had triumphed over her first martyrdom through suffocation by hot steam.

17 Macioce, *Undique Splendent*, 129.
Anthony Abbot.\textsuperscript{18} Paleotti had proclaimed that in order to reach the *idioti* - which here in Santa Cecilia especially included not only common Christian Romans, but poor pilgrims – sacred paintings must efficaciously inspire sensuous, rational, and spiritual delight within viewers.\textsuperscript{19} The achievement of conjuring these delights was dependent upon the painter’s successful imitation of nature.\textsuperscript{20} As mentioned earlier, Cardinal Federico Borromeo also had a high esteem for subjects of nature as vehicles for meditation. Yet, there is even another contemporary (and friend) of Paleotti and Borromeo, the Jesuit Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, who in 1615 published a tract entitled, *De ascensione mentis in Deum per scalas creaturarum* (*The Soul’s Ascension to God, by the Steps of Creation*), in which he declared that man could ascend to God through the contemplation of his creation: nature.

In this World then which comprehends the Universality of things, there are many things which are altogether wonderful, but what more especially calls for our Admiration, is their Greatness, Multitude, Variety, and Efficaciousness, and Beauty. All which being attentively weighed and considered (God enlightening the Eyes of our Understanding) will help us to a sight of a Greatness, Multitude, Variety, Power, and Beauty of such Immensity, that our Souls will be ravished into Transport and Ecstasy.\textsuperscript{21}

For Bellarmino, as for Paleotti and Borromeo, the contemplation of nature, of all created things, could gradually lead man to ascend the spiritual ladder to knowledge of and union

\textsuperscript{18} Macioce, *Undique Splendent*, 129.

\textsuperscript{19} Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le imagini christiane,” 68r-69v. See also Chapter 2, pp. 39-41 above for my discussion of Paleotti’s “delights.”

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 68r-69v.

with God. This position accords with Paleotti’s as outlined in his 1582 *Discorso*, yet this is not the only parallel that can be made. Bellarmino also repeatedly referred to the “distance” between God and man, as he is invisible.²² Scriptures and the mirror of nature (as God’s creation), however, remedied this deficiency.²³ This sentiment accords with Paleotti’s repeated mention of *lontananza*, not only between man and God, but things and people separated from us through the defect of time and place.²⁴ For Paleotti, nature and similitude render absent things, present to the viewer, thus solving the deficiency of distance.²⁵ This position helps us to understand Bril’s frescoes at Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, and the prominence of landscapes in sacred imagery in general.²⁶

Paintings of saints and hermits were of course important for the Christian viewer, as memorials and “memory aids,” particularly in the Counter-Reformation era.²⁷ Another passage in Bellarmino’s *The Soul’s Ascent to God, by the steps of Creation*, further informs us of the significance of not only images of saints and hermits, but of saints and

²² Bellarmino, *The Soul’s Ascent to God*, 34.

²³ Ibid.


²⁵ Ibid. See also Chapter 2, pp. 38-39.

²⁶ See also Carla Hendriks and Bert W. Meijer, ed., *Northern Landscapes on Roman Walls: The Frescoes of Matthijs and Paul Bril* (Florence: Centro Di, 2003).

²⁷ Sacred imagery as an aid for memory was something specifically outlined by the Council of Trent’s decree on art, which along with their function as bibles for the illiterate and as vehicles for exciting the emotions, was used to validate the utilization of sacred art in the face of Protestant attacks.
hermits in landscapes. According to Bellarmino, because nature as God’s creation can serve as a substitute for the distance (or his invisibility to man) between God and man, saints and hermits sought communion with him by retreating to the wilderness.

. . . many Saints have been so passionately in love with him as to retire from the World into Deserts and Solitudes, that they might contemplate him with more advantage. Of which number were holy Mary Magdalen, Paul the first Hermit, St. Anthony, and many more . . . .

Bril’s frescoes serve not only as testaments to nature and to God’s presence in all created things; the saints and hermits serve as models of exemplary lives and faith, having left the material world, to retreat to nature in order to feel closer to God.

Other artists who contributed to the decoration of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere include Fabrizio Parmigiano, Guido Reni, and Giovanni Baglione; the latter two were members of the Accademia di San Luca. Parmigiano also painted frescoes (ca. 1600) featuring more saints and hermits in prayer, which are set in naturalistic landscapes within the lunettes at the entrance of the church (Fig. 125). The most compelling works in terms of Paleotti’s “theology of nature,” Lombard naturalism, and the significance of Caravaggio in Post-Tridentine Rome, are not the frescoes but the altarpieces. For the Chapel of St. Cecilia, Guido Reni (1575-1642) painted the altarpiece depicting the

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28 Bellarmino, The Soul’s Ascent, 34.


Martyrdom of St. Cecilia (Fig. 126). St. Cecilia kneels with arms outspread, facing the viewer as she awaits the blow of the sword from the executioner behind her. While her form and upturned, delicate face draw general parallels with figures by Raphael, the tenebrism and the composition bespeak a Lombard origin, and in particular, an awareness of Caravaggio’s work in the Contarelli Chapel (Figs. 61, 63). Similar to the illumination of the figures in Caravaggio’s Martyrdom of St. Matthew, the figures of the executioner and St. Cecilia in Reni’s work are thrust forward by the inky black background and the raking light emanating from an unseen source from the upper right (from the upper left in Caravaggio’s Martyrdom). There are, moreover, general parallels between Reni’s and Caravaggio’s canvases. As in Caravaggio’s Martyrdom of St. Matthew, Reni deemphasized the heavenly sphere by including only a subtly lit cloud with angels, thereby reducing the distance between the heavenly and earthly worlds. The executioners in Caravaggio’s and Reni’s respective paintings are both frozen at the most pregnant moment, their bodies tensed and composed along a diagonal, ready to deliver the fatal blow. Their faces are partly obscured in shadow enhancing the menace inherent in narratives of martyrdom. Reni’s apparent appropriation of Caravaggio’s tenebrism renders the figures present and tangible for the viewer.

During the opening years of the Seicento, the weight of Caravaggio’s authority in the formulation of a plebian language that effectively reached out to the common populace can be evidenced in Reni’s other early works. In 1604, for example, Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini commissioned Reni to paint an altarpiece depicting the Crucifixion of St. Peter (Fig. 127) for the complex of the Tre Fontane, Rome. Reni’s familiarity and
adoption of Caravaggio’s own *Crucifixion of St. Peter* (Fig. 69) for his altarpiece at the Tre Fontane is undeniable. While there are some differences between the two canvases, one quickly notices that Reni emulates Caravaggio’s dynamic composition, freezing the action at the moment of the lifting of the cross upon which St. Peter is crucified. Reni too chose to depict three workers who struggle in their task to lift the upside-down cross into position. Unlike Caravaggio, however, Reni isolated his figures against a lush, but shadowy, landscape. Despite the inclusion of a more precise setting, the darkness of the background landscape combined with Reni’s adoption of a raking light creates an effect of drama and tangibility comparable to the tenebrism in Caravaggio’s work. Reni’s figures display an equal degree of naturalism in their anatomy, unidealized features (Fig. 128), and ungainly poses. Apparently, Reni’s intent to appropriate some of his conventions did not go unnoticed by Caravaggio.

Similar types of parallels can be made between Baglione’s two altarpieces for the side aisles of Santa Cecilia and Caravaggio’s work in the Contarelli Chapel. Baglione’s ca. 1600 *St. Peter and Paul* (Fig 129) and *St. Andrew* (Fig. 130), while exhibiting somewhat affected gestures, present the viewers with monumental figures pushed to the frontal plane, stark simplicity, dramatic tenebrism, and extreme naturalism similar to that found in Caravaggio’s Contarelli canvases. In addition to his canvases for Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Baglione also contributed to the decorations for the Cappella Aldobrandini

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in S. Nicola in Carcere (a commission from Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini which included Old Testament scenes and a *Last Supper*, ca. 1599-1600), painted an altarpiece for the Jesuit mother church, il Gesù (*Resurrection*, ca. 1603), participated in the decoration of San Giovanni in Laterano, and completed an altarpiece (*Resurrection of Tabitha*, 1604) for the Cappella Clementina in St. Peter’s.

Reni and Baglione, however, were not the only artists to utilize the conventions of Caravaggio’s naturalistic style at Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. Francesco Vanni (1563-1610) was commissioned by Cardinal Sfondrato to paint a *Christ at the Column* (lost, ca. 1600) for the altar near the entrance, and a lunette for the main altar of the crypt depicting *The Death of St. Cecilia* (ca. 1605, Fig. 131).[^32] Vanni’s figure of St. Cecilia was clearly based on the sculpture (1600) by Stefano Maderno (which was also completed for Cardinal Sfondrato), as they share the same prostrate pose in which her remains were said to have been found. In Vanni’s canvas, two female figures tend to her body, which combined with St. Cecilia’s pose, suggests the moment the saint’s body was discovered, as described in Antonio Bosio’s *Passio*.[^33] Bosio recalled that the saint’s body was covered, and her head was not visible possibly because her face was turned facing the ground.[^34] Bosio further added that the saint’s body was found in exactly the same position as when she died.[^35] The female attendant at the right has just dried the blood.


[^34]: Ibid.

from the wound in St. Cecilia’s neck, a detail explained by the small blood-stained cloths that were found at her feet when her body was rediscovered in 1599. The central female attendant, however, appears to be in the midst of covering the saint’s body with a silk gauze veil (the same that was discovered over the saint’s body when it was discovered), while simultaneously suggesting that she has just removed the veil to reveal St. Cecilia’s corpse. The implication of this dual-purposed action is an important one. It references the past – the moment of St. Cecilia’s death and internment – while at the same time it symbolically reenacts the unveiling of the body by Cardinal Sfondrato in the present. The tangibility of the figures, moreover, further makes a case for a scene that is unfolding before the viewer. Vanni, who was in Rome in 1600, seems aware of Caravaggio’s revolutionary Contarelli paintings, as he utilizes tenebrism to accentuate the corporeal bodies of the figures, and to project the figures toward the frontal plane, thus intensifying their physical and psychological proximity to the viewer.

Vanni does not appear to have been a member of the Accademia di San Luca, despite the fact that Baglione mentioned that his portrait was hung at the Accademia. Yet, the artist was closely linked to the Oratorian circle as he too was a member of the Congregazione dei Sacri Chiodi along with Cardinal Sfondrato, Filippo Neri, Cardinal Cesare Baronio, and Cardinal Federico Borromeo. In addition, he was a follower of

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36 Von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 24, 521. According to Von Pastor, “the small cloths stained with blood [was] mentioned by Paschal I.”

37 Baglione, *Vite*, 111.
Federico Barocci, an artist equally close to the Oratorians. He received an important commission from Pope Clement VIII in 1602 for an altarpiece *Simon Magus Rebuked by St. Peter* destined for the Cappella Clementina in St. Peter’s, which according to Baglione, was obtained through the intervention of the Oratorian, Cardinal Cesare Baronio. Upon completion of this altarpiece in 1603, Vanni received the habit of *Cavaliere di Cristo* through the intercession of Cardinal Sfondrato. Vanni executed several other canvases for Cardinal Sfondrato, and a painting by Vanni also appears in the inventory of Cardinal Del Monte.

Other artists active in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII demonstrated knowledge of Lombard style, and awareness of Caravaggio’s pictorial revolution. The Cavaliere D’Arpino enjoyed great success as the favorite painter of the pope. The young Caravaggio had worked in D’Arpino’s workshop shortly after his arrival in Rome, an association that seems to have made an impression on D’Arpino’s style. Already in 1598, D’Arpino’s altarpieces, although still inflected with traces of *maniera*, reveal naturalistic qualities. Although the Lombard style had already made its

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38 Profili, “Francesco Vanni,” 65. Barocci had painted the *Visitation* and the *Presentation in the Temple* altarpieces for the Oratorian church in Rome, Santa Maria della Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova).

39 Baglione, *Vite*, 110. Vanni also executed a portrait of Cardinal Baronio, for the same cardinal. See Barbieri, Barchiesi, and Ferrara, *Santa Maria in Vallicella*, 149.


appearance in Rome prior to Caravaggio’s arrival ca. 1592, works such as D’Arpino’s 
Mocking of Christ (Fig. 132) for Santi Biagio e Carlo ai Catinari point to a more direct 
confrontation with Caravaggio’s style. In this altarpiece, D’Arpino reduces the scene to 
its absolute essentials, isolating Christ and his three tormenters against a dark, 
nondescript background. The forceful light that comes from an unseen source on the 
right, barely breaks through the shadows, and merely highlights and emphasizes the 
figures, and in particular Christ. The body of Christ shows no evidence of torture, as it 
has not yet begun. His face and body thus display a quiet beauty, but not overtly perfect, 
as his form exhibits a non-idealized naturalism not seen in Federico Zuccaro’s 
Flagellation (Fig. 37). The faces of his tormenters, moreover, are treated with a verism 
that serves as visual foil to the tranquil figure of Christ. The two figures flanking Christ, 
in particular, are especially menacing as they are engulfed in shadow.

D’Arpino’s fellow academician, Cristofano Roncalli (ca. 1553-1626) similarly 
utilized Lombard conventions beginning in the 1590s and which were made more 
insistent with the arrival of Caravaggio in Rome. Roncalli, who was on friendly terms 
with Caravaggio, painted an altarpiece for the Cappella Clementina in St. Peter’s that 
clearly indicates an awareness of the Conversion of St. Paul (Fig. 70) in the Cerasi 
Chapel. In the ca. 1599-1605 Death of Sapphira (Fig. 133), the figure of Sapphira is 
placed in the right foreground, comparable to St. Paul’s position in Caravaggio’s Cerasi 
lateral. Roncalli even appropriates the strong foreshortening and outstretched arms of St. 
Paul for his own figure of Sapphira. Roncalli does not employ Caravaggio’s dramatic 

43 See Chapter 5, p. 200, note 197 above for references to Roncalli’s membership at the Accademia di San Luca.
tenebrism here, nevertheless the strong shadows combined with the directed light from
the upper left creates a similar effect in enhancing the three-dimensionality of his figures,
while simultaneously pushing the figures toward the viewer and freezing the action. Even
St. Peter and the secondary figures in Roncalli’s altarpiece demonstrate a closer
adherence to the principle of imitation of nature, as they are more specifically rendered,
rather than beautifully generic and idealized.

Similar correlations can be observed in Roncalli’s ca. 1603 Resurrection of Christ
(Fig. 134) for San Giacomo degli Incurabili, Rome. As in the figure of Sapphira in the
altarpiece for St. Peter’s, the figure in the foreground of the Resurrection is foreshortened
dramatically to project toward the viewer much in the same manner as Caravaggio’s St.
Paul. Furthermore, Roncalli adopts a variation of Caravaggio’s tenebrism, in the dramatic
chiaroscuro employed to impress the tangibility of the scene on viewers. Christ is
enveloped by a divine glow, but his corporeal body still seems rooted on the earth.

One can understand why Caravaggio, in the transcripts of the libel suit brought
against him by Baglione, identified both the Cavaliere d’Arpino and Cristofano Roncalli
as artists who knew how to paint and imitate natural things well, as valenthuomini. As
mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, both Baglione and Prospero were also named
as valenthuomini in the same deposition, but their inclusion can be explained by their
close adoption of Caravaggio’s style, particularly, his naturalism and tenebrism. This
observation also explains the appearance of Orazio Gentileschi’s name among this elite
list. Gentileschi was a member of the Accademia di San Luca, one of the earliest
Caravaggisti and a friend of the painter, whose genre scenes, such as the ca. 1615 Lute
Player (Fig. 135, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), and religious scenes, like the roughly contemporary Christ Crowned with Thorns (Fig. 136, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig), closely parallel Caravaggio’s own work in Rome (Figs. 91, 103).  

One must wonder, however, why Annibale Carracci, Antonio Tempesta (1555-1630), and especially Federico Zuccaro also found their way on this list. As discussed in chapter five, Annibale and Caravaggio shared a common interest in the imitation of nature, but the paths they took in its exploration diverged; Annibale moved toward a more classical naturalism, while Caravaggio embraced a veristic brand of naturalism. Annibale did not paint many public commissions during the papal reign of Pope Clement VIII, as his first five years in Rome were occupied with the Farnese Gallery. There were, however, some rare moments within his Roman oeuvre when Annibale crossed the boundary into Caravaggio’s territory (Figs. 56, 57). There is thus some basis for Caravaggio’s characterization of Annibale as a painter who understood how to paint and imitate natural things well. Yet it is more difficult to explain Zuccaro’s and Tempesta’s inclusion into this category. Abromson concludes that they were “quite simply, Rome’s finest painters.” This explanation, however, does not hold up against the fact that Zuccaro did not experience much success as a painter in Rome under Pope Clement VIII. Zuccaro, however, executed a work in 1595 for the Olgiati Chapel in Santa Prassede that

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44 Orazio Gentileschi’s name appears in the “Entrata e Uscita” ledger at the Accademia di San Luca. See ASL, Entrata e Uscita del Camerlengo 1593-1625, 27r, 29r, 35r.

45 Abromson, Painting in Rome, 269.
reveals a more pronounced naturalism, heretofore unseen in Zuccaro’s oeuvre. In
Zuccaro’s Christ Carrying the Cross (Fig. 137), the setting is nondescript, and the
tenebrism dramatic, which enhances the physical and psychological tangibility of the
figures, who although plentiful in number, are painted through a naturalistic lens.

Antonio Tempesta, too, did not execute many public works (and then mostly
decorative exterior frescoes, now lost), as he was primarily known as an engraver.
Although not examples of monumental sacred art, Tempesta’s work expresses a clear
interest in nature. His ca. 1593 oil on stone Death of Adonis (Fig. 138, Galleria Sabauda,
Turin) depicts a landscape in the tradition of Brueghel and Bril. Tempesta’s roughly
contemporary etching of the Conversion of St. Paul (Fig. 139, Fine Arts Museum, San
Francisco), moreover, displays liveliness, a keen attention to naturalism in the rendering
of the figures and animals, and pronounced chiaroscuro. Caravaggio must have
recognized that both Zuccaro and Tempesta embraced the conventions of Lombard
naturalism to a degree, thus validating their designation as valenthuomini. Significantly,
Zuccaro and Tempesta were members of the Accademia di San Luca, as were all the
artists mentioned by Caravaggio.46

It is in Rome, during the reign of Pope Clement VIII that we find Paleotti’s
“theology of nature” intertwining with the paths of Counter-Reformation theory,
exercises on meditation, the endeavors of charitable organizations and institutions, the

46 Zuccaro was the first “principe” of the Accademia di San Luca (1593-1594).
See Chapter Four, p. 113. Tempesta name appears in the “Entrata e Uscita” ledger at the
Accademia di San Luca. See ASL, Entrata e Uscita del camerlengo 1593-1625, 35r,
39v, 143v, 144r.
Accademia di San Luca, and the patterns of public patronage and private collecting. Caravaggio, D’Arpino, and Roncalli contributed to the program of altarpieces at Santa Maria della Vallicella, the Oratorian church, and they shared common patrons, including the Mattei, and the Giustiniani. Among the three of them they monopolized the realms of both public and private patronage during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII. D’Arpino took the lion’s share of the public commissions under Pope Clement VIII, contributing to and supervising the decoration programs at St. Peter’s, and San Giovanni in Laterano. For the papal nephew, Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, D’Arpino painted altarpieces for Santa Maria in Via and Santa Maria in Transpontina. He also executed altarpieces for Santa Maria della Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova), S. Biagio e Carlo ai Catinari, and San Luigi dei Francesi. D’Arpino’s works also found their way into the collections of Cardinal Del Monte, the Giustiniani and the Mattei, all of whom were also patrons of Caravaggio.

Roncalli, too, enjoyed immense success in the public arena. In addition to his commissions for St. Peter’s and San Giacomo degli Incurabili, Roncalli also executed paintings for San Giovanni in Laterano, Santa Maria della Vallicella, SS. Nereo e Achilleo, and San Gregorio al Celio, and his works appear in the inventories of both the Mattei and the Giustiniani families. Was it the convergence of the utilization of Paleotti’s *Discorso* (“theology of nature”) for instruction at the Accademia, and the membership or presence of Caravaggio (and/or Del Monte) at the same institution, which urged other members of the Accademia to adopt his distinctive style and patrons to seek their artists from the Accademia? These facts are difficult to determine, but one would be wise not to discount them out of hand. What is clear is that although Caravaggio executed far fewer
public works than many of his contemporaries, he nevertheless made the greatest impression on the style of artists – including even the most prominent of them, such as D’Arpino and Roncalli - and the patterns of contemporary patronage. His patrons were likewise among the most prominent and powerful ecclesiastics in Rome, and were entrenched in the Catholic Church’s urgency to reestablish their authority in the face of Protestant aggression. Catholic doctrine, tradition, and faith were at stake, and sacred art functioned to propagate and strengthen them. At the center of this Counter-Reformatory milieu of cardinals, patrons, and artistic and religious institutions who contributed to shaping a canon reformulation of sacred art was Cardinal Paleotti.
CHAPTER 7
THE LEGACY OF PALEOTTI’S DISCORSO IN THE SEICENTO

Too often scholars discount what they cannot prove with archival documentation. It is necessary, however, to keep an open dialogue and continue to explore different avenues of research. Counter-Reformation theory too has often been rejected as a determining factor of sacred style and its realm of influence or authority questioned. In the case of Paleotti’s Discorso, however, the evidence is clear. Beginning almost immediately after the publication of this Discorso in 1582, five more Counter-Reformatory treatises on sacred art were published in Italy, and all of them referred to Paleotti and his ideas on naturalism: Raffaello Borghini’s Il Riposo (1584), Gregorio Comanini’s Il Figino overo del fine della pittura (1591), Antonio Possevino’s Tractatio de Poësi & Pictura ethica, humana, & fabulosa collate cum vera, honesta, & sacra (1595), Federico Borromeo’s De pictura sacra (1624), and Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli’s Trattato della Pittura, e Scultura, uso, et abuso loro (1652).1 These authors, like Paleotti, advocated a type of naturalism that was rooted in Lombard traditions.

In 1584, two years after the publication of Paleotti’s Discorso, the Florentine, Raffaello Borghini published his dialogue Il Riposo. Borghini, unlike Gilio and Paleotti, was a layman. Based on the divergent observations made in Il Riposo, Borghini comes across to the reader as a split personality. On the one hand, parts of his dialogue betray his Florentine heritage and appreciation for Tuscan maniera art, while at the same time in

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1 Borghini, Il Riposo; Comanini, The Figino; Borromeo, De pictura sacra, ed. Barbara Agosti, Quaderni del Seminario di Storia della Critica d’Arte; Possevino, Tractatio; and Ottonelli, Trattato, ed. Casale.
other parts one can detect inflections of a Counter-Reformatory tone. Marcia B. Hall has pointed out moments in Borghini’s *Il Riposo* where his lenient attitude comes into conflict with the Counter-Reformatory statements made elsewhere. One of the examples in which this conflict is evident is in Borghini’s discussion of Bronzino’s *Resurrection* (1568) for Santa Maria Novella in Florence. According to Hall, “The exquisitely sensuous angel standing next to Christ was condemned as lascivious, of course, but then it was praised as a work of art that one would love to have in one’s home – a position we do not find articulated by his clerical counterparts.”² Despite these contradictions, one cannot discount the various Counter-Reformatory points of similarity between Borghini’s text and his predecessors, and in particular, with Paleotti. The reproof of Michelangelo and his imitators is also found here, repeating as he does many of the criticisms already voiced by Gilio and Paleotti. The maniera tendency to distort the anatomical proportions of figures, giving female figures the muscles of a man and utilizing and “mixing” poetic and profane adornments into sacred themes were clearly proscribed. Simplicity, clarity, and piety were to be observed in sacred paintings.

As in Gilio’s *Degli errori*, Borghini begins his dialogue with the observation of nature as God’s divine creation. The early chapters of Borghini’s *Il Riposo* were dedicated to the *paragone*, a debate about the relative merits of sculpture versus painting. Baccio Valori, the advocate for painting, presented ten reasons for the superiority of painting over sculpture in which the significance of nature and naturalism in painting played a predominant role. Valori began by first equating God’s act of creating the sky to

painting: “The great Father like the painter made the sky of many varieties of painted stars.” It was, however, the painter’s ability in imitating nature that carried the weight for his rationalization of painting’s superiority over sculpture. According to Valori, painters could not only imitate figures, but also nature itself: the earth, water, air and sky, which was impossible for sculptors to capture. The tangibility and palpability of three-dimensional figures were also underscored as critical elements in imitation. Valori admitted that sculptors did indeed capture this quality, but deemed the results deficient in comparison to the degree of imitation that the painter could accomplish, particularly in the flesh, the skin, and the beauty in the facial features. Significantly, Borghini specifically cites the inability of sculptors to express color and shadow as the crux of what made painters superior in their art. It was indeed the vehicle of color and shadow that enabled painters universally to imitate nature. Painters had the knowledge and ability not only to capture nature in all its divine beauty, but also to depict accurate and tangible figures, and more importantly, “everything transparent and impalpable” through the vehicle of color. It is here that Borghini proclaimed the importance of capturing the affetti of the spirit, “shame, dread, fear, pain, and the cheerful passions,” which painters achieved through, significantly, the shifts in color in the faces of figures; an effect that

3 Borghini, Il Riposo, 30: “Il gran Padre come pittore fece il cielo di tante varie stele dipinto.”

4 Ibid., 34: “. . . come ne’vari colori degli uccelli, e degli altri animali, nell’onde nelle spume, nelle tempeste, ne’nuvoli, nelle saette, nella varietà dell’aria, ne’fiumi, ne’fuochi, ne’ sudori, ne’fiati, e ne’ semplici con grand’utile della vita humana.”

5 Ibid., 43-44.

6 Ibid., 32-33.
was dependent on light and shadow. The import given to color in creating tangible figures in Paleotti’s *Discorso*, is here repeated and extended by Borghini, to the apprehending of palpable emotions and the passions of the mind.

As it was the case with Paleotti, Borghini was also adamant about the incompatibility of *maniera* style and sacred themes. Borghini reprised the tenet that painting served as books for the ignorant and illiterate, requiring simplicity, scriptural and historical accuracy, and devotion in order to move the emotions of the viewer. The *maniera* tendency of placing the excellence of art above truth and piety could not be tolerated. Confronted with misguided representations of sacred themes, and copious nudes in sacred locations, such as in Jacopo Pontormo’s San Lorenzo (Florence) frescoes, Borghini found them disrespectful to sacred truth, God, and the temple of God. As in the treatises of his predecessors, many of the problematic stylistic elements voiced by Borghini’s interlocutors seem to implicate Michelangelo and his followers specifically. Excessive distortions of the body, such as the exaggeration of musculature, and giving women the body and musculature of men were condemned. Among other *maniera* artists who received the disdain of Bernardo Vecchietti, the adherent of Counter-Reformation decorum in Borghini’s dialogue, were Giorgio Vasari and Agnolo Bronzino. Vasari’s *Resurrection of Christ* (Santa Croce, Florence) was deemed a “bad painting” for it deviated from scriptural accuracy, and his *Christ Carrying the Cross* (Santa Croce, Florence) lacked the proper demonstration of the *affetti*, particularly in the figure of

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Christ.\(^8\) Bronzino’s *Christ in Limbo* (Santa Croce, Florence) was “badly made” because of the lasciviousness of the figures, which induced and stimulated impure thoughts of the flesh rather than devotion.\(^9\) The Florentine exemplar of Counter-Reformatory decorum was, for Borghini, an artist whose style significantly departed from Central Italian *maniera* and rather embodied North Italian influences: Santi di Tito. Santi’s Florentine religious paintings were praised for their beauty, their accurate observation of honesty, truth and devotion. Two of his paintings for the church of Santa Croce, the *Resurrection of Christ* and the *Supper at Emmaus*, were particularly esteemed for their color that was described as “very beautiful” and “very lively.”\(^10\) These paintings mark a decisive shift away from Vasarian *maniera*, to a reform of sacred painting in Florence, in which Santi di Tito was the primary exponent. It is significant to note that these two altarpieces were executed immediately after Santi’s supposed visit to Venice (1571-72). The golden light in Santi’s *Supper at Emmaus* clearly demonstrates Venetian influence, but the realism of the figures, and affective use of shadows, significantly suggest knowledge of Lombard style that makes a visit or stop in Lombardy equally likely. It is apparent that Borghini shared the conviction of Paleotti before him, that naturalism in sacred painting should replace the flagrant display of artistic license characteristic of *maniera* style. It is no mere coincidence that the works of Santi di Tito were singled out as models of appropriately executed sacred paintings, for his altarpieces of the last three decades of the Cinquecento

\(^8\) Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 93, 191.

\(^9\) Ibid., 109-10.

\(^10\) Ibid., 188.
(Fig. 58) express the kind of simple, tangible, descriptive verism and piety, rooted in Lombard practice and theory, which represented the opposite of the artificial, cerebral, and licentious style of the maniera. Furthermore, it is undeniable that Borghini’s emphases on naturalism, and of the critical value of color and shadow in creating tangible forms and efficacious rendering of the affetti, were consonant with the Lombard style of painting. Despite his Florentine patriotism and his loyalty to the Florentine maniera tradition, Borghini was certainly aware of Paleotti’s Discorso and substantiated its continued dissemination and authority.

In 1591, the Mantuan Lateran Canon, Gregorio Comanini (ca. 1550-1608), published his dialogue Il Figino overo del fine della Pittura. In the dialogue, which is set in Lombardy, the interlocutors, Ambrogio Figino, Stefano Guazzo, and Ascanio Martinengo, discuss the function of painting; Guazzo plays the role of or advocate for the poet, Martinengo, the prelate, and Figino, the painter. The theology of naturalism and truth to nature in sacred painting also pervade Comanini’s dialogue, which were significantly shared by other literary writers closest to the author: Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, Torquato Tasso and Giacomo Mazzoni.\(^{11}\) The dialogue began with the discussion of imitation. Whereas the interlocutors agreed that imitation was the principal aim for the painter, they further divided imitation into two types: icastic and fantastic. According to Guazzo, icastic imitation deals with the imitation of something from nature, and fantastic imitation, when a painter forms his own fanciful creation through his

While artistic license and creativity find a place within the realm of painting with fantastic imitation, it was icastic imitation, or naturalism that was given greater value. Surprisingly, it is Guazzo, the poet, who first proposes the superiority of icastic imitation in painting. In Guazzo’s estimation, both icastic and fantastic imitation bring delight, but it was icastic imitation that elicited the most pleasure from the viewer. Guazzo’s reasoning was closely associated with the affective connection between painting and viewer demanded by the Tridentine decree and expounded by Paleotti in his Discorso. The viewer’s delight derives from seeing something familiar, whether it is a figure or story. According to Guazzo:

> When we look again at a story familiar to us, painted on a panel or on a wall, we are happier than we would be on seeing a painting made up of fanciful objects and bizarre things . . . delight derives from the comprehension of things, because things please more or less according to our greater of knowledge them.  

Furthermore, Guazzo added that icastic imitation required more skill from the artist, reversing the Vasarian-maniera value on artistic invention:

> . . . he [the painter] displays much more skill and talent in icastic imitation than in fantastic, since it is more difficult to imitate a real thing, as in the case of painting a portrait of a living man, than to paint a false one, such as portrait of a man without the constraint of the original. This greater difficulty is what I think gives the viewer greater satisfaction and enjoyment.  

Comanini shares this high estimation of truth to nature, or icastic imitation, with Paleotti. This position, however, was also to some extent undercut by an appreciation not only for

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13 Ibid., 40-41.

14 Ibid., 40.
fantastic imitation, but also for sophistication and intellectualism in works that could only be appreciated by more educated viewers. Comanini’s dialogue thus meanders through a complex course of moral and Counter-Reformatory views and aesthetic theory, which differs significantly from the more dogmatic tone of Paleotti’s *Discorso*, in which he underlines constantly that the painter’s goal is to achieve the comprehension of the uneducated public. Comanini’s more liberal view, nevertheless, had no bearing on the importance of naturalism, a precept that forms the foundation of the dialogue.

The second issue that occupied Comanini’s interlocutors was whether painting was intended primarily to delight or instruct. For Guazzo, delight is the primary purpose of painting, and the degree of delight is dependent upon the comprehension of things, “because things please more or less according to our greater or lesser knowledge of them.”

Icastic imitation thus served to bring about this comprehension, by its similarity to natural things that could be understood and grasped by the viewer. Martinengo, on the other hand, proposed that instruction was the ultimate function of painting:

I also say that the useful, and not the pleasurable, is the aim of imitation, to the achievement of which delight contributes . . . because images, being imitations, brings happiness, they are therefore means and instruments that lead to an understanding of those things we long to know.  

Their debate does not appear to reach a definitive resolution. It is clear, however, through the words of Martinengo, that painting had the capacity to both delight and instruct viewers through the imitation of the natural world. Figino, in Comanini’s dialogue,  

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16 Ibid., 45.
likewise states that good painters always observe verisimilitude in their works, particularly when depicting sacred figures.\footnote{Comanini, \textit{The Figino}, 87-88. Comanini’s dialogue, however, does give a respectful place for the “fantastic” in art, but this is relegated primarily to non-sacred imagery.}

The importance of naturalism is intricately related to the concept of truth, the superiority of the sense of sight, and its associated effect on the \textit{affetti} of the viewer. Comanini’s interlocutors do not merely refer to naturalism as empirical truth, but as indicative of tangible presence. According to Martinengo, paintings teach people constantly, “for in the morning and at noon and at night and at all times they can be seen and visible . . . .”\footnote{Ibid., 60.} Martinengo described sacred paintings as “living scripture,” an analogy that underscored the relevancy of a naturalistic style, or icastic imitation, which could transform a two-dimensional medium into palpable and tangible presences.\footnote{Ibid.}

In Comanini’s dialogue, as in Paleotti’s \textit{Discorso} (and Borghini’s 1584 \textit{Il Riposo} after him), the importance of color, and particularly shadow, are explicitly mentioned as means of effectuating a tangible presence. According to Guazzo:

Virtue stands out when contrasted with vice, just as in music certain harsh sounds, judiciously mixed in at certain tempos, render the sweetness of the perfect harmonies even more pleasing to the ear; and just as in painting black makes white stand out.\footnote{Ibid., 52.}
Martinengo, in quoting the Eighth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, equally pointed to the importance of color, “both the learned and unlearned derive utility from the imaginary effects of colors before their eyes.”\textsuperscript{21} The value of the effects of color derive not only from the traditional \textit{paragone} between painting and the written and spoken word, where the significance of sight versus hearing is played out, but also from the need to arouse the emotions and devotion of the viewer through tangible figures and scenes. Comanini held the view, shared by Paleotti and others, that painting could function in aiding those who could not reach the heights of divinity through mere contemplation, but who needed the assistance of a physical understanding and confirmation. “Imitation delights,” Martinengo stated, “because it prepares the intellect and aids in contemplation.”\textsuperscript{22} This statement, in which delight in imitation is interpreted as a means to stimulate the intellect and contemplation, is remarkably similar to Paleotti’s distinction of sensuous delight, rational delight, and spiritual delight, and his adaptation of these delights into a three-part scheme for viewing paintings.

Comanini’s interpretation of sacred painting as “living scripture” reinforced the significance of icastic imitation, or truth to nature, and the effects of color, light, and shadow in creating tangible forms. This opinion is consonant with the style of Northern Italy, and specifically, Lombard artists from Leonardo onwards. It was appropriate, therefore, that Ambrogio Figino is interwoven into this dialogue, not only as a friend of Comanini (who dedicated his treatise to the artist), but also as an exemplar in sacred

\textsuperscript{21} Comanini, \textit{The Figino}, 56.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 45.
painting. Figino (1548-1608) was, in fact, a Milanese artist who spent his early training (ca. 1564-1570) producing reproductions after Leonardo’s drawings in the workshop of Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, who owned numerous graphic works by Leonardo and his followers.\(^{23}\) Leonardo’s interest in naturalism, the study of nature, and the effects of light and shadow during his Milanese years has been credited as the decisive model for and stimulus upon the naturalistic style of Lombard artists, including Lomazzo (Fig. 140) and Figino (Fig. 141).\(^{24}\) In Leonardo’s opinion, painting should be considered as “the sole imitator of all the manifest works of nature . . . which with philosophical and subtle speculation considers all manner of forms: sea, land, trees, animals, grasses, flowers, all of which are enveloped in light and shade.”\(^{25}\) It was indeed Leonardo’s legacy in empirical observation, truth to nature, and the interdependent effects of color, light, and shadow that manifest themselves in Figino’s works; a naturalism that corresponded to Comanini’s “icastic imitation” required in sacred painting. It is in fact, Comanini’s madrigal on Figino’s realistic portrait of Francesco Panigarola (another advocate of naturalism) which sparked the dialogue on the purpose of painting.\(^{26}\) Moreover, in


\(^{24}\) Andrea Bayer, ed., *Painters of Reality*.


\(^{26}\) “Eloquente pittura/È questa, e’ l color muto/Ch’aurea bocca figura/Dolce risona et è ne’ detti arguto/Con la viva parola/Pinge ‘l Panigarola/Parla col color morto/Il mio Figino accorto/Emuli son; ma non sai dir se ‘l vinto/Sia pittor o ‘l dipinto”; Gregorio Comanini, *Il Figino overo del fine della pittura*, in *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento. Fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, vol. 3, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1962), 254-55; Panigarola’s reverence for nature is clearly evident in his sermons; see
Comanini’s view, Figino was an exemplar of a Christian painter. The interlocutor Martinengo tells Figino that he was

all the more worthy of praise because he withdraws from the ranks of those artists who add more garbage to the rotten world with their paintings, and he refrains from putting his hand to works inappropriate for the Christian religion and for piety.\(^{27}\)

The Lombard piety and naturalism of Figino’s style seems to have captured the attention of the Archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, and later, his younger cousin, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, both advocates of Post-Tridentine reform in art. In fact, Figino painted two portraits of Carlo Borromeo, which may have been commissioned by the Archbishop himself.\(^{28}\) In 1586, prior to his departure for Rome, Cardinal Federico Borromeo entrusted Figino with the important commission for a painting for the Collegio Borromeo in Pavia.\(^{29}\) Federico’s predilection for Lombard naturalism is equally evident in his writings and collections, in which works by Leonardo, Bernardino Luini, and Figino figure prominently.

The theoretical position on naturalism expounded in the last decades of the Cinquecento was elevated to an even more prestigious status in the writings of Federico Borromeo. In 1624, Borromeo published his treatise *De pictura sacra*, and in 1625, his...

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\(^{27}\) Comanini, *The Figino*, 52.


\(^{29}\) Stefania Bedoni, *Jan Brueghel in Italia e il Collezionismo del Seicento* (Florence and Milan: Litografia Rotoffset, 1983), 43.
Musaeum, followed by numerous other devotional treatises, some of which were issued posthumously. Borromeo’s De pictura sacra reprised many of the same topics and opinions as the Post-Tridentine theorists who preceded him, and in particular, Paleotti. The similarities between Borromeo’s De pictura sacra and Paleotti’s Discorso confirm Federico’s deep knowledge of Paleotti’s text, which would not be surprising, considering the close friendship they shared. The likelihood of Federico being well-versed in Paleotti’s theories and the principle ideas in his treatise is even more credible as Federico, as a young man, was sent (ca. 1570s) to study under Paleotti in Bologna. Their relationship appears to have continued in Rome, both having arrived in the city at roughly the same date. Borromeo may also have personally known Comanini and his treatise, as both authors shared a common friend in the poet Torquato Tasso. These connections link Borromeo with other Counter-Reformatory theorists and proponents of naturalism, which likewise point to an intricate collective move in raising Lombard naturalism to canonical status in the realm of sacred art, even far beyond Rome and well into the Seicento.

In his De pictura sacra, the anti-maniera polemic, replete in antecedent Counter-Reformatory treatises on painting, was again taken up by Borromeo. Faces and bodies of male figures should not be depicted with the delicacy of women. Sacred figures should not be represented with vigorous athletic bodies, nor with strange and violent gestures.

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31 Borromeo, De pictura sacra, Book 1, Chapter 12, “Dei corpi atletici,” 35.

32 Ibid., 36.
Painters, he argued, must not mix the sacred with the profane, or include nudes unless necessary or warranted by Scriptures.\textsuperscript{33} Even in the garments of figures, Borromeo censured painters who utilized \textit{cangianti}, or strange and bizarre colors.\textsuperscript{34} In Borromeo’s assessment, painters should observe verisimilitude in sacred figures and scenes, and refrain from the artificial conventions of \textit{maniera} style. Artists, he argued, were to follow scriptural or Early Christian texts when available, utilizing the descriptions of scenes and sacred figures in order to execute images that are not only truthful, but “natural” and tangible.\textsuperscript{35} Although contemporary paintings seemed to be lauded more for the expression of faces and bodies that were overly ornate and delicate, Borromeo believed that artifice gave more pleasure when it did not remove or subtract from the “naturalness” of the figures or scenes.\textsuperscript{36} In fact, in Borromeo’s view, painters should not even endeavor to produce beauty that denies similitude, particularly in portraits.\textsuperscript{37} A good painter, according to Borromeo, merited praise only if he imitated the true likeness of the sitter.\textsuperscript{38} An integral part of making a figure tangible depended on the artist’s ability to depict the \textit{affetti} of the figures. As in Paleotti’s \textit{Discorso}, Borromeo equated painters with orators as both shared the primary task of persuading the faithful. For Borromeo, the principal

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\textsuperscript{33} Borromeo, \textit{De pictura sacra}, Book 1, Chapter 6, “Dell’ignude,” 23-26;  
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., Book 1, Chapter 7, “Della vestimenta,” 26-27.  
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., Book 2, Chapter 7, “Dei ritratti al naturale,” 53-56.  
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., Book 1, Chapter 12, “Dei corpi atletici,” 35.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., Book 2, Chapter 7, “Dei ritratti al naturale,” 55.  
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function of the painter was to excite and move the emotions of viewers, in order to keep the sacred figures or scenes alive in their hearts. The truthful and natural expression of the emotions in paintings brings delight (equivalent to Paleotti’s “sensuous delight or knowledge” and Comanini’s “icastic imitation”), and arouses the same respective affetti in viewers. According to Borromeo,

since the reverence and adoration of God and the saints, and that to revere and to imitate, and to fear, and to lament and hope, is nothing more than emotions; and likewise this is the usefulness that is derived from sacred painting.

Borromeo concluded that the depiction of the emotions, through color and design, was essential in making the represented scene and figures alive, which in turn awakened the minds and spirits of viewers, generating divine thoughts.

In 1609 Borromeo opened the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, and by 1611 had already envisioned founding an Academy for artists in Milan (Accademia del Disegno). In 1618, he donated his art collection to the Ambrosiana Accademia del Disegno (officially opened in 1620), and in 1625, published his Musaeum, an abbreviated guide to its collection. The Musaeum, while not a formal treatise on sacred painting is nevertheless critical in understanding Borromeo’s personal taste in art and especially his view of style.

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39 Borromeo, De pictura sacra, Book 1, Chapter 10, “Quanto sia cosa eccellente l’esprimere l’affetto,” 32.

40 Ibid., Book 1, Chapter 10, “Quanto sia cosa eccellente l’esprimere l’affetto,” 33: “E questa è quella sola parte che a noi potrà recare sempremali giovento maggiore, poiché il riverire e adorare Iddio e i santi, e quelli lodare e imitare, e temere, e dolersi e sperare, non sono altro che affetti; e parimente queste sone le utilità che si traggono dalle pitture sacre . . . .”

41 Ibid., 33-34.
in sacred imagery as the collection was primarily intended to serve as didactic models for young artists in the Academy. The Accademia del Disegno, according to its rules of 1620, was instituted specifically to teach artists how to create effective, pious, orthodox religious art in accordance with the Tridentine decree:

Not for any other human reason was the present Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture founded, but so that with its help craftsmen will make those things that pertain to the divine cult better than those they now make . . . .

The rules stipulated not only the function and administrative procedures of the Academy, but in addition, outlined the major instructional goals that included depicting “naturally” the various parts of the human body, and especially the treatment of color, which Borromeo declared, was the major and most essential part of art. The works in Borromeo’s collection were thus selected for not only their doctrinal accuracy, but also for their artistic and affective qualities. As in his 1624 De pictura sacra, the Musaeum is replete with praise for sacred paintings that expressed a reflection of nature.

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45 Borromeo, *Musaeum*; For a reproduction of Borromeo’s original manuscript, and English translation, see Quint, *Cardinal Federico Borromeo*, 182-259.
Borromeo’s emphases on nature and verisimilitude certainly may be interpreted as a response, as in previous Counter-Reformatory treatises, to the artificiality and “artfulness” of the maniera style; however, it can also be viewed as an expression of his taste for a naturalistic style that was embedded in the artistic patrimony of his native Lombardy. Titian was described as superior to other painters in color and especially in the imitation of nature. It was nature itself to which Titian was indebted, as it was his study and skill in imitating nature that is credited for his success as a painter. Titian’s Adoration of the Magi was among the paintings donated to the Ambrosiana, and it was his handling of the landscape that Borromeo most admired in his Musaeum.46

It is not, however, merely the naturalism of the landscape that received Borromeo’s admiration, but also Titian’s handling of shadow and light. Borromeo described a passage within the painting where a black figure is absorbed by the surrounding darkness while at the same time highlighted by spaces of uncertain light, thus appearing and disappearing before the viewer’s eyes.47 Titian’s empirical representation of the landscape and the truthful depiction of optical distance calls to mind

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46 According to the Act of Donation of 28 April 1618, Titian’s Adoration of the Magi was executed for Cardinal D’Este of Ferrara, who intended it as a gift for King Francis. It ultimately did not reach its destination, and was acquired by Federico’s cousin, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo. Federico eventually purchased the painting from the Ospedale Maggiore, which had inherited the painting upon San Carlo’s death; see Borromeo, Musaeum, 45, n. 1 and, 45-46: “Tiziano nel ritrarre il paese fece uso di tutta la sua valentia e anche solo da questo poi riconoscerne in lui il grande artista ch’egli era. Di fatto dove i confini, come le falde dei monti e le estremità dei piani, so confondono, a bella posta lasciò la tela quale è preparata, senza stendervi sopra colore alcuno, a fine di esprimere con quella lacuna l’allucinazione per cui gli occhi guardando oggetti, non lontani s’ingannano.”

47 Borromeo, Musaeum, 47.
the studies and experiential theories on nature of Leonardo da Vinci. More significantly, however, it is Titian’s treatment of shadow and light that evokes the *sfumatesque* effects of “revealing and concealing” in the work of Leonardo.

Numerous paintings by the Flemish artist Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625) are also represented in the Ambrosiana collection. The precise date when Brueghel met Borromeo is unknown, but it is certain that their acquaintance began in Rome in the last decade of the Cinquecento.  

48 Brueghel appears to have been part of Borromeo’s household in Rome, and even followed Borromeo to Milan upon his elevation as Archbishop of Milan. Borromeo owned sixteen paintings by Brueghel, of which landscapes and still-life subjects predominate. In his *Musaeum*, Borromeo praised Brueghel’s skill in imitating nature, not only in color, but in facility. Brueghel’s paintings of landscapes and still lifes deserved, according to Borromeo, “the highest praise of nature and of art.”  

49 The religious value of nature as in landscapes and still-lifes was indicated in Borromeo’s descriptions of a collaborative painting between Brueghel and Rotthammer. In this painting of birds (Rotthammer) and flowers (Brueghel) Borromeo explained the mystery embedded within the subject: “The flowers and the birds represent spring and winter, the extreme opposites of nature, symbolizing the joy of Heaven and the sadness of earthly life.”  

50 Caravaggio’s *Basket of Fruit* in the Ambrosiana collection was

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50 Ibid., 64: “I fiori e i ghiacchi rappresentanti della primavera e dell’inverno, gli estremi opposti di natura, simboleggiano la gioia del Cielo e la tristezza del soggiorno terrestre.”
also highly esteemed for its “lively color” (*tinte vivaci*).\(^{51}\) Borromeo’s misidentification of Caravaggio’s subject as “flowers” instead of “fruit” in the *Musaeum* has often been remarked as an indication for the Cardinal’s low estimation of the artist and his painting. The mere fact, however, that Caravaggio’s painting was among the selective works from Borromeo’s collection discussed in the *Musaeum*, points to the contrary. Furthermore, the symbolic mystery discerned in Brueghel’s and Rottenhammer’s painting is equally applicable to Caravaggio’s *Basket of Fruit*, in which we see the juxtaposition of ripe and decaying fruit.

An appreciation for natural and tangible figures was also expressed by Borromeo. Titian’s *Deposition from the Cross* represented the “perfection of art,” particularly in the realistic depiction of Christ’s dead flesh, which according to Borromeo, “challenged nature itself.”\(^{52}\) The painting of the *Magdalene* by the Lombard painter, Bernardino Luini, was also exceedingly praised for its tangible naturalism, to such an extent that Borromeo further added, Titian’s *Magdalene* seemed dead and bloodless in comparison.\(^{53}\)

\(^{51}\) Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 70. “Nè di poco pregio è un canestro, che gli sta presso, con dei fiori a tinte vivaci. Lo fece Micheangelo da Caravaggio che si acquistò gran nome in Roma. Io avrei volute porgli accanto un altro canestro simile, ma non avendo potuto nessun raggiungere la bellezza ed eccellenza incomparsabile di questo, rimase solo.” It has been often noted that Borromeo erroneously described Caravaggio’s canvas as a basket of flowers, rather than a basket of fruit, thus proving Borromeo’s lack of interest in Caravaggio’s style and work. The line of thinking, however, discounts the significant fact that Caravaggio’s canvas was mentioned at all. In his *Musaeum*, Borromeo selectively chose to describe only key works out of the large Ambrosiana collection, and only the works and artists he particularly admired, including Leonardo, Bernardino Luini, and Jan Brueghel the Elder.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 48.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 64-65.
The figure of the Christ Child in Luini’s *Christ Holding a Lamb* and *Holy Family* (after a design by Leonardo da Vinci) was admired for its “fleshiness” (*morbidezza*).\(^{54}\) The depiction of the affetti was also intricately connected to the concept of tangible presence, and according to the Academy’s rules, was among the essential precepts for istorie.\(^{55}\) Leonardo da Vinci was highly lauded for capturing the “motions of the spirit/mind” of the apostles in his *Last Supper* (a copy of which is in the Ambrosiana collection).\(^{56}\) According to Borromeo, viewers are so captivated and moved by the expression of the affetti, combined with the gestures of the bodies, that the painting appears to speak to them, as if they could hear the words spoken by the apostles and Christ.\(^{57}\)

Borromeo’s predilection for nature is further evidenced in his devotional treatises. In his *I tre libri delle laudi divine* (undated manuscript, published posthumously), Borromeo clearly saw nature, and thus the imitation of nature, as evidence of God’s divine creation:

> After which consideration [the habits of birds], entering thoughtfully into the most ample fields of the sea, there we will find schools of fish, which, in addition to their number, with enormous greatness of types, provide us testimony of the generous spirit of that Lord who produced them . . . .”\(^{58}\)

\(^{54}\) Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 58, 62.


\(^{56}\) Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 65-68.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 66.

Borromeo’s *I tre libri delle laudi divine* encapsulated God’s providence over the celestial, and particularly the earthly and human realms, which, as Alessandro Martini discerned, was a communal interest among many within Borromeo’s circle, including Luis de Granada, Francesco Panigarola, Torquato Tasso, and Giovanni Botero.\(^{59}\) Furthermore, in his autobiographical work, *Pro suis studiis* (1628), Borromeo described how the contemplation of the natural world could lead to spiritual awakening:

> ... I have had my room ornamented with paintings, and I have made sure that all of them are excellent; there is not one vulgar or cheap thing. And the pleasure I take in looking at these painted views has always seemed to me as beautiful as open and wide views [of nature] ... Instead of them, when they are not had, paintings enclose in narrow spaces, the space of earth and the heavens, and we go wandering, and making long [spiritual] journeys standing still in our room.\(^{60}\)

Borromeo’s words repeat Paleotti’s sentiments as expressed in his *Discorso*: “painting transforms rooms, and the distant is made present.”\(^{61}\) The natural world represented a second form of truth, after scriptural texts, which could and should be represented in art. In Borromeo’s mind, nature was also spiritual, and thus conducive to meditation. This view, although not as explicitly stated, was already voiced in Paleotti’s *Discorso*. In his discussion on the delight derived from paintings, the sensuous aspect of nature, which

\(^{59}\) See Alessandro Martini’s introductory essay in Borromeo, *I tre libri delle divine*, 16-17.

\(^{60}\) Borromeo, *I tre libri delle divine*, 268.

\(^{61}\) Paleotti, *Discorso*, Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le Imagini christiane,” 70r: “... con la pittura si mutano le loro stanze, & di lontane si fanno presenti ...”
included the treatment of color, light, and shadows, could lead one to ascend to the contemplation of divine things.\footnote{Paleotti, \textit{Discorso}, Libro 1, Capitolo 22, “Della dilettatione, che apportano le Imagini christianese,” 68r-71r.}

In addition to the theorists already discussed, two Jesuit contributions to the Counter-Reformatory view on painting appeared in 1595, and in 1652, respectively. The first treatise, \textit{Tractatio de Poësi & Pictura ethica, humana, \& fabulosa collate cum vera, honesta, \& sacra}, was authored by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1533-1611). Born in Mantua, Possevino entered the Compagnia di Gesù in 1559, and spent his early career as a diplomat or missionary for the Catholic Church in Sweden, Russia, Poland, and France.\footnote{Celestino Testore, “Antonio Possevino,” in \textit{Encyclopedia Cattolica}, vol. 9 (Florence: Casa Editrice G. C. Sansoni, 1952), 1836.} Later, Possevino served as a professor of theology in Padua (1587-1597).\footnote{Ibid.} During his tenure, Possevino wrote his \textit{Bibliotheca selecta qua agitur de ratio studiorum} (1593), a compilation of important theological texts that included a chapter on painting, later published separately in 1595.\footnote{Ibid., 1836-1837.} In his brief \textit{Tractatio}, Possevino emphasized that truth and the imitation of nature in painting efficaciously moved the viewer’s emotions, a position the Jesuit author shared with Paleotti, whom he cited in his work.\footnote{Possevino, \textit{Tractatio}, 281, 290.}

The importance of verisimilitude is once more emphasized in the Jesuit Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli’s 1652 treatise entitled, \textit{Trattato della Pittura, e Scultura, uso, et...}
abuso loro, composto da un theologo, e da un pittore. The title of this treatise indicates that it was a collaborative work between Ottonelli, the theologian, and a painter, whom scholars identify as Pietro da Cortona. This treatise has been relatively ignored in Counter-Reformation scholarship, but its significance should not be underestimated, as Ottonelli cites Paleotti throughout and heavily relies on the cardinal’s Discorso.\textsuperscript{67} The similarities between the treatises of Ottonelli and Paleotti, further substantiates my conviction about the authority of the Discorso, in this case, seventy years after its publication in 1582. Moreover, both treatises were closely connected to academies of art.\textsuperscript{68} As we recall, Paleotti replaced Cardinal Federico Borromeo as the cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca, Rome (along with Cardinal Del Monte) a position he held until his death in 1597. There is no documentary evidence to prove definitively that Paleotti’s Discorso was utilized in the curriculum of the Accademia di San Luca, however, the mere selection of Paleotti as cardinal-protector certainly implies that his theoretical views on sacred painting were determined to be a positive and appropriate guide for the program and objective of the Accademia, which was to teach


\textsuperscript{68} The title page of Ottonelli’s Trattato, clearly stated that the treatise was written “Per offerirlo a’ Signori Accademici del Disegno di Fiorenza, e d’altre Città Christiane.”
artists how to execute proper religious images. Ottonelli’s and Pietro da Cortona’s treatise, on the other hand, was specifically written and submitted to the Accademia del Disegno, Florence, and Pietro was already closely associated with the Accademia di San Luca in Rome both as a member and a principe.69 It is not sufficient to explain this correlation as a mere coincidence, particularly in light of the similarities in these authors’ positions on naturalism and the function of sacred art.

Naturalism played a critical role in Ottonelli’s treatise, as well. It was the similitude of paintings to natural things that substantiated the nobility of the painter’s profession. Painting is described as a clear mirror, which in its reflection of truth or reality, could present to the eyes of viewers the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice, moving the human spirit to emulate the good and to shun the bad.70 Ottonelli reiterated (repeatedly throughout his text) many of Paleotti’s key convictions, including: that the office of the painter and of painting was to imitate the object or subject truthfully and naturalistically; profane art had no place in sacred art and should not even be collected; the senses and the imitation of nature were critical in inciting sensuous, rational, and spiritual delight.71 It is Ottonelli’s high opinion and faith in the efficacy of the representation of nature and a naturalistic style that explicates the selection of artists

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70 Ottonelli, Trattato, ed. Casale, 18, 53.

71 Ibid., 57-61. Ottonelli even provides the same anecdote as Paleotti of a man looking at a night sky in order to demonstrate how the delights function.
mentioned in his treatise, which included Leonardo da Vinci, Correggio, Giorgione, Titian, Caravaggio, and Annibale Carracci, all of whom were shaped, to varying degrees, by the Lombard credence in truth to nature in their works. The qualities of naturalism inherent in what I have here identified as Lombard theory and practice were the precise characteristics attributed to many of the artists discussed favorably by Ottonelli.

Ottoneili quoted Lomazzo’s judgment of Leonardo’s excellence in painting natural things, having observed and studied his subjects from life prior to laying his brush on the canvas in order to capture a certain natural vivacity.\(^72\) The verisimilitude of Correggio’s frescoes in the cupola of the Cathedral of Parma (Fig. 10) so amazed the eyes of viewers that one could not believe that they were painted.\(^73\) Lodovico and Annibale Carracci were admired for similar reasons, for they were both identified as followers of Correggio’s style, particularly in the perfection of the older master’s color.\(^74\) Giorgione was described as a “skillful man [in representing] truth” and whose works demonstrated a marvelous and masterful liveliness of the “beautiful manner of Lombardy.”\(^75\) Ottonelli praised Titian’s portraits for their truthful and life-like quality, adding that the subjects seemed more tangible and alive than painted, and Caravaggio for his unyielding observation of the natural.\(^76\)

\(^{72}\) Ottonelli, *Trattato*, ed. Casale, 123.  
\(^{73}\) Ibid., 23.  
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 26.  
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 166-67.  
\(^{76}\) Ibid., 23, 26.
The most compelling similarity between Ottonelli’s and Paleotti’s respective treatises centers on the argument of the function of sacred painting and its audience. In remarking upon the traditional *paragone* between books and painting, Ottonelli proclaimed, “If books instruct, and move [the reader] . . . we can say that images have the power for the same instruction, not only for the literate, but even more for the simple . . .”

Ottonelli not only asserted that painting served as the Bible for the illiterate, but he also utilized Paleotti’s appellation of painting as a communal language (*linguaggio commune*). Truth to nature, in addition to truth to Scriptures, appears to have still reigned supreme in the mid-seventeenth century. Clearly, the concern for the poor, illiterate, and ignorant Christian had not abated. Images that naturally and in lively fashion expressed the subject which they imitated could instruct and move the viewer by eliminating the visual, psychological, and mental remoteness caused by the deficiencies of distance, both time and place, which separated the painting from the viewer.

Tangibility in sacred painting served as the key that opened the door to salvation for all Christians.

These five Post-Tridentine treatises underscore the authority of Paleotti’s ideas in their consensus on the reformulation of sacred painting based on naturalism. Although in 1652, when Ottonelli published his *Trattato*, maniera style was no longer prevalent as it had been in the Cinquecento, naturalism as a form of truth versus artificiality as a form of

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77 Ottonelli, *Trattato*, ed. Casale, 53: “. . . se il libro ammaestra, e muove…possiamo dire, che anche l’immagine habbia forza di tale ammaestramento, non solo co’letterati, ma di più co’semplici.”

78 Ibid., 18.
invention was still the paradigm that painters of sacred imagery were encouraged to follow. The preference for a naturalistic style and the interest in nature, I argue, stems largely from two factors: the need to reconnect affectively worshipper and image without resorting to archaic modes of indicating presence; and the rationale that painting dal naturale deters the artist from excessively re-interpreting sacred themes. It was clear that artists had no alternative but to re-interpret sacred subjects, as they were removed both in time and place from their own reality. Unlike still-lifes, landscapes, and portraits that could be empirically observed, religious subjects could not, and indeed required a certain degree of invention. The exploitation of invention and artful manipulation in maniera style, however, demonstrated to the Tridentine council and Post-Trent theorists the problem that artistic license posed to the sanctity and power of sacred imagery. Empirical observation provided a truth, which in conjunction with Scriptures, imposed a clear boundary between God’s truth, or divine nature, and the artist’s truth, or the idea in his mind. Furthermore, a naturalistic style had an inherent potential to re-present a tangible presence, and build an affective communication with viewers without resorting to the old-fashioned iconic images with gold backgrounds. In this capacity, Paleotti and his followers, from Borghini to Ottonelli, envisioned a sacred style based on naturalism. It was not, however, the naturalism of Central Italy, based upon constructions of rational perspective and idealized figures, but the naturalism of Northern Italy, specifically Lombardy, where optical qualities and effects of color, light, and shadow were employed to create palpable, tangible, and affective sacred presences.
Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio are two names that do not often appear together in a sentence. It is evident, however, that in the closing years of the Cinquecento in Rome their two worlds converged, resulting in a canon reformulation of sacred imagery; Paleotti, as I have argued, provided the theoretical framework, and Caravaggio’s canvases served as the visual mouthpiece. Paleotti’s 1582 _Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane_ followed a preexisting trend, in literature and in art, to find a visual language that countered the intellectualism, complexity, and artificiality of maniera style. It was, however, the clarity of Paleotti’s views on nature and naturalism and its correspondence to long-established exercises on meditation that directed interest to the naturalistic style of Lombardy as the ideal model for sacred painting. The Lombard preference for creating “tangible presence” in sacred art through strong contrasts of light and shadow, verity of color, veristic fidelity to human forms and emotions, and to the observed world was the stylistic heritage of Caravaggio’s youth and were qualities that he never relinquished.

In the realm of sacred painting, Paleotti understood that if the imitation of the natural world was unsuccessful, the viewer could not help but focus on the skill of the artist rather than the subject of the painting, which was something the Counter-Reformation Church and the Council of Trent vigorously tried to bring to an end. The imitation must be seamless and convincing for a sacred painting to have its desired effect: to affect viewers’ emotions, not to evoke their admiration. Sacred painting must be tangible, moreover, in order to compensate for the deficiencies of lontananza. In order to
reach the general populace, artists must render their sacred narratives and figures *present* to the viewer. Just as the importance placed on the validation of the cult of saints and martyrs necessitated the display of physical “proof” of their relics, it follows that sacred painting must provide “proof” of presence to the eyes of the illiterate faithful in order to move them emotionally and spiritually. The publication of a Latin, canonical edition, of his *Discorso* in 1594, followed closely on the heels of Paleotti’s appointment as cardinal-protector of the Accademia di San Luca, which placed him in a prime position to put his “theology of nature” in motion. Paleotti, moreover, shared this position with none other than Cardinal Del Monte, who at this precise time in 1595 became Caravaggio’s first protector and major patron.

One cannot conclude that Paleotti’s canon reformulation and Caravaggio’s formulation of sacred style were intended to support mutually one another’s objectives or that it was a purposeful collaboration, yet at the same time, these scenarios cannot be discounted. Caravaggio’s Roman sacred style, however, clearly points to the artist’s awareness of Paleotti’s “theology of nature.” Paleotti’s important ties to the Oratorians, the Jesuits, the Accademia di San Luca, and his friendships with key cardinal-patrons in the circle of Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, provided an ideal network for the dissemination of his ideas, which could have put him into contact with Caravaggio. There is no document to validate such a meeting, but the lack of documentation should not preclude the possibility, even likelihood, that they did. They were from different professional and cultural classes, yet they moved in the same social circles. Caravaggio’s
most important patrons and protectors were also among Paleotti’s closest friends and associates.

The Roman ambient was already fertile ground for the promulgation of a naturalistic theory of art. The straightforward discourse of the Oratorian meetings, the affective and experiential spiritual exercises of the Jesuits, the simple sermons of Francesco Panigarola, the naturalistic literature and poetry of Torquato Tasso and Giovan Battista Marino, the pared down musical compositions of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, and the empirical and scientific investigations of Galileo Galilei were all consonant with Paleotti’s reformulation of sacred imagery based on the imitation of nature and Lombard naturalism in late Cinquecento and early Seicento Rome. It was imperative to affectively reach and educate the common Christians who were generally poor and illiterate. There was no place for convoluted compositions, erudite meanings, and fanciful displays of artistic virtuosity. Naturalism was the obvious and only solution. For Paleotti, it was fundamental to supply the means by which everyone might attain spiritual enlightenment and communion with God. Viewers must not only understand what they are seeing, but sacred painting needed to impress urgently upon the minds and hearts of viewers that what they see is relevant to them.

How could one even imagine reaching heaven when what is presented to the eyes is so far removed from the familiar and pedestrian? How could poor, illiterate Christians hope or conceive of obtaining spiritual enlightenment or communion with God when the saintly models are portrayed as unnaturally beautiful, ethereal, and so far-removed from themselves? The Lombard naturalistic lens provided the means to convey sacred truths in
a didactic, tangible, simple, and affective manner. Common Christians needed to see that spiritual enlightenment, salvation, and communion with God was obtainable, even for those with torn and dirty clothes, and dirt beneath their fingernails. A statement by Galileo, significantly one that he attributed to Cardinal Baronio, perfectly encapsulates Paleotti’s sentiment: “the intention of the Holy Ghost is to teach us how one goes to heaven, not how heaven goes.”¹ Caravaggio’s canvases answered the call for a *linguaggio commune* that Paleotti insisted was necessary in order to reach the general populace. Caravaggio understood this, whether subconsciously or consciously and either because of or in spite of his knowledge of or associations with the Counter-Reform figures who were active in Rome at the end of the turn of the seventeenth century. In Seicento Rome, Caravaggio’s dark canvases served as mirrors of the quotidian world: “For now we see in a mirror darkly, but then we see face to face.”² Thanks to Paleotti and Caravaggio, every Christian would see the face of God.

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² 1 Corinthians 13: 12.
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Fig. 111 Caravaggio, *Crowning with Thorns*, 1605, oil on canvas (Cassa di Risparmi, Prato)
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Fig. 114 Caravaggio, *St. Jerome Writing*, 1606, oil on canvas (Galleria Borghese, Rome)
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