

Annibale Carracci and the Modern Reform of Altar Painting

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Article abstract

Annibale Carracci constitue un objet d'autant plus intéressant à étudier que sa carrière va à l'encontre des conventions et des normes de la Contre-Réforme et de l'art baroque. Les qualités éclatantes de ses oeuvres nous forcent à revoir les notions de décadence et de crispation habituellement associées à la Contre-Réforme en même temps qu'elles évitent les excès typiques des peintures de commande de la période baroque réalisées sur commande que la Réforme jugera par trop « démonstratives ». Annibale Carracci a permis à la peinture de progresser d'un bond en poussant plus loin les réalisations de ses prédécesseurs de la Renaissance tout en faisant le tri des idées fortes ou des contraintes pratiques qui régissaient leurs créations. À bien des égards, il faut cependant rappeler que cette perception s'explique moins par le désir d'éclairer son programme de réforme que par le besoin de faire correspondre Annibale à la dimension grandiose du Baroque et à l'esprit rigoriste de la Contre-Réforme. Les commentaires d'historiographes tels que Malvasia et Bellori, qui avaient tenté de sortir Annibale de la déplorable réputation que lui avait faite Baglione—qui était pour la Contre-Réforme—ont poussé plus d'un auteur à interpréter son recours aux motifs classiques comme le parfait exutoire d'une passion baroque. De telles exagérations entretenues par Donald Posner, S.J. Freedberg et Charles Dempsey sont imprégnées de l'idée que l'Antiquité classique a joué un rôle prédominant dans l'art baroque. Mais les recherches ne se sont jamais penchées sur les raisons pour lesquelles Annibale Carracci est un réformateur. Consciente des pièges que représentent les normes et les classifications, mon étude se fonde sur l'idée que le programme réformateur de Annibale réside dans de nouvelles modalités de l'art narratif et dans les changements drastiques apportés aux conventions et aux traditions de la peinture d'autel. Sa fameuse *Crucifixion* peinte en 1583 et toujours visible dans l'église Sta. Maria delle Carità à Bologne offre une illustration convaincante de la réforme telle qu'Annibale Carracci la concevait.

Annibale Carracci and the Modern Reform of Altar Painting

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Résumé

Annibale Carracci constitue un objet d'autant plus intéressant à étudier que sa carrière va à l'encontre des conventions et des normes de la Contre-Réforme et de l'art baroque. Les qualités éclatantes de ses oeuvres nous forcent à revoir les notions de décadence et de crispation habituellement associées à la Contre-Réforme en même temps qu'elles évitent les excès typiques des peintures de commande de la période baroque réalisées sur commande que la Réforme jugera par trop « démonstratives ». Annibale Carracci a permis à la peinture de progresser d'un bond en poussant plus loin les réalisations de ses prédécesseurs de la Renaissance tout en faisant le tri des idées fortes ou des contraintes pratiques qui régissaient leurs créations. À bien des égards, il faut cependant rappeler que cette perception s'explique moins par le désir d'éclairer son programme de réforme que par le besoin de faire correspondre Annibale à la dimension grandiose du Baroque et à l'esprit rigoriste de la Contre-Réforme. Les commentaires d'historiographes tels que Malvasia et Bellori, qui avaient tenté de sortir Annibale de la déplorable réputation que lui avait faite Baglione—qui était pour la Contre-Réforme—ont poussé plus d'un auteur à interpréter son recours aux motifs classiques comme le parfait exutoire d'une passion baroque. De telles exagérations entretenues par Donald Posner, S.J. Freedberg et Charles Dempsey sont imprégnées de l'idée que l'Antiquité classique a joué un rôle prédominant dans l'art baroque. Mais les recherches ne se sont jamais penchées sur les raisons pour lesquelles Annibale Carracci est un réformateur. Consciente des pièges que représentent les normes et les classifications, mon étude se fonde sur l'idée que le programme réformateur de Annibale réside dans de nouvelles modalités de l'art narratif et dans les changements drastiques apportés aux conventions et aux traditions de la peinture d'autel. Sa fameuse *Crucifixion* peinte en 1583 et toujours visible dans l'église Sta. Maria delle Carità à Bologne offre une illustration convaincante de la réforme telle qu'Annibale Carracci la concevait.

Annibale Carracci (1560–1609) is a particularly revealing figure to study because his oeuvre challenges the conventions and norms of Counter-Reformation and Baroque art in the treatment of religious images. Qualities vividly displayed in his work emend notions of decadence and stricture associated with the Counter-Reformation and at the same time avoid the excesses of commissioned Baroque art, condemned by the Reformation as external manifestations of the Catholic faith.¹ Annibale Carracci effected a great leap in advancing the accomplishments of his Renaissance predecessors and unravelling the motivating ideas or practical exigencies of their creations. On a number of counts Annibale has been most legitimately named a reformer and forerunner of the modern age in that he created innovative and ambitious *istorie* in a continual relation to the Albertian *istoria*, or the legible character of the painted account. However, such a perception has been driven less by the prospect of shedding light on his reforming agenda than for the sake of fitting his work into the spirit of regularization enunciated at the Council of Trent (1563) and the classicist expression of the Baroque. Interventions of seventeenth-century historiographers Cesare Malvasia and Giovan Pietro Bellori, who had attempted to emancipate Annibale from a plummeting reputation generated by Giovanni Baglione's pro-Counter-Reformation biography of him, gave rise to interpretations of Annibale's usage of classical motifs as an outlet for a Baroque passion.² Such conceits entertained by Donald Posner, S.J. Freedberg, Charles Dempsey, and, more recently, Clare Robertson are tinged with the notions of the prevailing role of classical antiquity in Baroque art.³ Yet, the course of research has never examined why Annibale Carracci is a reformer. Mindful of the trappings of norms and

classifications, I argue that his reforming agenda lies in his new modes of narrative art and dramatic changes to the conventions and traditions of altar painting. The altarpiece of the *Crucifixion with Saints* from 1583 (fig. 1), still in situ in the church of Sta. Maria della Carità in Bologna, offers compelling indications of Annibale Carracci's artistic reform.

There is ample evidence in support of Annibale's reform if one is willing to recall both Aby Warburg's ideas on the Northern influence on Renaissance altarpieces in Italy and Hans Belting's contentions on the absorption of Christian icons and vestigial images into Western art.⁴ An examination of Annibale's reform in a continuum with the Renaissance past reveals his retrospective leanings, which engaged a sustained work of recovery that was also a path to early modern self-awareness. In the Renaissance the notion of reform was indebted to the entwined contexts of the expressive resources of figural art and the Christian mysteries inherent in ancient images. Michelangelo's move toward sculpture as a return to a mode of cult statuary that preceded the rise of easel painting was a deliberate revival of a period of purer Christian art.⁵ Michelangelo's efforts to put a humanist conception of art in the service of the traditional functions of religious images fostered a program through which it became possible to see sculpture as key to a reformed religious art.

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw intense preoccupation with devotional continuities with the early Christian period, which had prompted Michelangelo's direction to reform art by means of archaic models. The radical solutions proposed by Michelangelo were to take religious images back to their *forma antiqua* in ways that did not comply with the legalistic reaffirmation of the continuity of tradition



Figure 1. Annibale Carracci, *Crucifixion with Saints*, 1583. Panel, 305 x 210 cm. Bologna, Sta. Maria della Carità (Soprintendenza per i beni artistici e storici per le province di Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì, Ravenna e Rimini).

in the Counter-Reformation. In the context of the Oratorian-led interest in the archaeological remains of the early Apostolic Church, a new sense of continuity as a testimony to the legitimacy of the Roman Church superseded the Renaissance preoccupation with reconstructing venerable image traditions. Saint Filippo Neri's interest in the Roman catacombs opened a whole new area of ecclesiastical studies, which has subsequently come to be known as Christian archeology; and the methodology of Cardinal Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1588–1607), in its close attention to chronology and obsessive concern with demonstrating the continuity of the Roman Catholic Church with the early Apostolic Church, was an orchestrated attempt to create a new ecclesiastical historiography.⁶ Such ability to match past examples to contemporary imperatives found new urgency and definition in the Counter-Reformation. All these factors

ensured that the post-Tridentine church displayed continuities with its medieval predecessor on the basis of an unprecedented range and quantity of written and oral traditions, not on visual evidence. Simon Ditchfield perceptively observed that Saint Filippo Neri and the Oratorian scholars, whom Cardinal Cesare Baronio encouraged to study the catacombs, were interested in confirming what they already knew from written sources to have been a time of Christian heroism and pagan cruelty.⁷

Cardinal Baronio was in fact disappointed in the art that was uncovered in the catacombs and in his *Annales* insisted on the crude, rough, and unpolished character of several artifacts from the Constantinian period.⁸ Baronio's castigation of the artless character of the catacombs recalled G.B. Armenini's perception of Byzantine icons in his *De' veri precetti della pittura* (1586) and Vasari's repeated use of the words *goffo* and *rozzo* in reference to early Christian art in his *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568* (1568).⁹ The considerable deterioration of the status of prototypal images as works of art in the Renaissance was the corollary to the rise of their cult value in the post-Tridentine decades. In other words, objects of special veneration from the catacombs, mosaics outfitting the Roman basilicas, and Eastern icons would continue to be regarded as historical documents of the identity of the Christian faith,¹⁰ and Byzantine image types were occasionally mounted on the high altars of newly renovated churches in the Counter-Reformation.¹¹ The difference in emphasis in their treatment by ecclesiastical writers and patrons as opposed to Renaissance artists marks the distinction between an archaeologically minded attitude and the focus on early Christian artifacts as the bearers of vestigial significance and aesthetic value. Such a chasm between institutional attitudes towards the current authority of religious imagery and the reform-oriented ideas held by artists played a determining role in the art of post-Tridentine altar painters such as Annibale Carracci.

In the early modern age, Annibale Carracci expounded reform-minded ideas that mirrored the religious life of his time in a manner that maintained and advanced Christian devotional ideals. Ideas on the insistence of faith in the benefits of Christ's Crucifixion and on interior reform of the individual were still central to the beliefs of laymen seeking a deeper and more personal Christian spirituality than institutional practices could offer.¹² A clear alternative to the regulations of the Christian faith was provided by a *pietas interiorizzata*, which permeates the art of Correggio, an essential predecessor of Annibale Carracci.¹³ Such private devotion was circulated in the Emilian circles of a Christian humanism rooted in the unity of *eruditio* and *pietas*, fostered through Erasmus's *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* and its popularity across the Italian peninsula. Reflective of reform-minded ideals, Annibale's *Crucifixion with Saints*

belongs to a series of altarpieces, such as his *Pietà with Angels* (1585, Parma, Galleria Nazionale), *St. Roch Distributing Alms* (1594–95, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie), and *Pietà* (1599, Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte), that offer palpable proof of his meditations on aspects of traditional images as he planned paintings that became distinctly modern works of art. Given its importance, the *Crucifixion with Saints* becomes central to an investigation of the creative interplay of retrospective and modern tendencies in his altarpiece production. His novelty here consists in his departure from a symbolic image of Christ Crucified and his determination to distinguish the legible character of the *istoria* of the ambitious post-Albertian painter from traditional images. *The Crucifixion with Saints* confronts the icon type of the Crucifixion with its modern articulation and yet remains in a powerful relationship to the most venerable icon type. No longer exclusively imbued with a divine truth or theological consensus, the Crucifixion locates its significance in a narrative identity grounded in the visual efficacy of an interrelation between the biblical account of the Gospel and the post-Albertian *istoria*. Implicit in such a representation of the Crucifixion was the painter's concern with making Christ the focal point for ritual and devotion.

Annibale Carracci's altarpieces provide eloquent testimony to the importance of purer forms of Christian art to his reform of altarpiece designs, and it is argued here that he adapted within his individual norms the Byzantine icon and its frontal character intended to focus devotional attention. His assimilation of the pure mode of icons to altar painting entailed dramatic transformations that broke decisively with all imitation of the iconographical model on which Counter-Reformation images based their authority. It was a valiant attempt to reform Western religious painting by casting it in the mould of the Byzantine icon tradition, with its frontal character in the portrayal of sanctity.¹⁴ In the *Crucifixion with Saints*, Annibale grafted the frontal mode of the icon onto his composition in order to flesh out a narrative rooted in the meditative and contemplative power of icons. The form of his Crucified Christ—frontal, closed eyes, head leaning to the left—is reflective of Byzantine currents harking back to the Duecento. A relevant example is the Master of Saint Francis's *Crucifix* of 1272 (fig. 2), which hung in Perugia's St. Francesco al Prato, a telling model of the archaic qualities of medieval Italian art that must have been familiar to Annibale, either directly or through Northern variations available in Bologna.¹⁵ Annibale familiarized himself with the icon through Bolognese and primarily Venetian collections of icons, which he must have seen during his trips to Venice. These collections were the main inspirational source for his retrospective articulation of ancient images in the creation of early modern ones. The late sixteenth-century perception of the icon as a primary source for the expressive systems of Renaissance dramatic



Figure 2. Master of Saint Francis, *Crucifix* (double-sided), ca. 1260–80. Tempera on panel. Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Rome).

paintings was provided through a most famous collection of Byzantine icons inherited by Lorenzo de Medici from Pope Paul II.¹⁶ The evidence suggests that the collecting of Byzantine icons was an integral feature of the antiquarian culture of Renaissance Italy, thus making icons such as the Duecento Master of Saint Francis's *Crucifix* a notional creative model for the Crucifixion narrative. The comparison between the Cross and the Crucifixion that began from the same assumption of the icon's value for likeness in the formalist account of Byzantine art is sustained in the sixteenth-century *Crucifixion* altarpiece by Annibale.

It appears that Annibale Carracci's first thought for his *Crucifixion* was to stress the solitary presence of Christ on the Cross, although his figure of Christ in a preparatory engraving from 1581 (fig. 3) is much different from its painted counterpart in the finished altarpiece.¹⁷ Annibale was determined to evolve his Crucifixion narrative from an archaic mode to a more dramatic and modern form, one that advances the dramatic fea-



Figure 3. Annibale Carracci, *Crucifixion*, 1581. Engraving, 49.2 x 34.7 cm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina (Albertina, Vienna).

tures of a traditional Crucifixion scene while underscoring the devotional sentiment of the Byzantine icon. The frontal presentation of his Crucified Christ holds the altarpiece's vertical axis and draws attention to a new iconic identity, what I call the restructuring of the Crucifixion icon to mark off holiness in altar painting more clearly than in experiments antedating the post-Tridentine period. Annibale Carracci advanced a simple assertion of the icon in a narrative context by confronting the canonical iconographies of the Crucifixion. To this end he enhanced the colouristic effect of the eclipse at the Crucifixion hour and bathed the Cross in a dramatic counter-light. The body of Christ lit up in the shape of a torch, silhouetted against a tormented horizon, recedes and simultaneously advances in consonance with the icon's mesmerizing sway from visible to invisible matter. The visual narrative of the *Crucifixion* unravelled mysteries and meanings never exploited in the traditional iconography hitherto.

Annibale Carracci's novelty consists here in his determination to find the complementarity between the post-Albertian *istoria* emending all symbolic representation of the Crucifixion and the Renaissance exigencies that depart from the static character of traditional renditions of the subject. In Van der Weyden's Vienna *Crucifixion* of 1445 (fig. 4), the symmetrical arrangement on both sides of the Cross transcends the norms of iconography and effectively constructs a powerful *istoria* by means of expressive devotional gesture and oriented gaze. Reflective of his Northern predecessor, whose enduring influence on Italian painting was recognized by many scholars,¹⁸ Annibale employs the coordinated gaze of the bystanders to achieve narrative coherence, while lessening, through diversified devotional gestures, the effect of symmetrical arrangement. His *Crucifixion with Saints* becomes an innovative, distinctly modern work of religious art that amplifies the devotional gestures to accomplish a more dramatic *istoria*. The heart-oriented hand of St. Petronio, richly attired in the right foreground, does not simply imply heightened worship but also points out a powerful response by both the painter and the bystanders to the presence of Christ on the Cross. Devotional gestures detectable in the Virgin Mary's lowered arms and St. Francis's kneeling position underscore a renewed preparedness on the part of Annibale Carracci to foster the dramatic solutions proposed by Van der Weyden and, at the same time, to retool the Northern Renaissance efficacy of gestures within early modern efforts to advance the traditional Crucifixion narrative.

The devotional character of the *Crucifixion with Saints* indicates how Annibale Carracci reinscribed and advanced the stolid virtues of icons in dramatic and narrative compositions that break irretrievably with conceptual and iconic paintings. The devotional connotations in the work of a modern painter like Annibale may refer to a range of archaic prototypes apparent in the later Crucifixion drawings of Michelangelo. Alexander Nagel has convincingly argued for the prevailing archaic element discernable in Michelangelo's later sculpture, a development of considerable interest also in relation to his Crucifixion drawings.¹⁹ As Paul Joannides recognized, the archaism of Michelangelo's late drawings was keyed to the criticisms levelled against facile pietism, and reflects favoured borrowings outside the mainstream of central Italian art.²⁰ In looking to the Trecento and to Northern art, Michelangelo returned in old age to interests he had never lost, namely, a deliberate revival of a period of purer Christian art, through which it became possible to reform contemporary religious art. His late Crucifixion drawings, such as the Windsor sketch from the early 1560s (fig. 5), intimate concerns with emotional intensity, communicated by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist. Their movements inhere in the vocabulary of extreme shock and pain, and epitomize a heightened response to the Crucifixion scene.

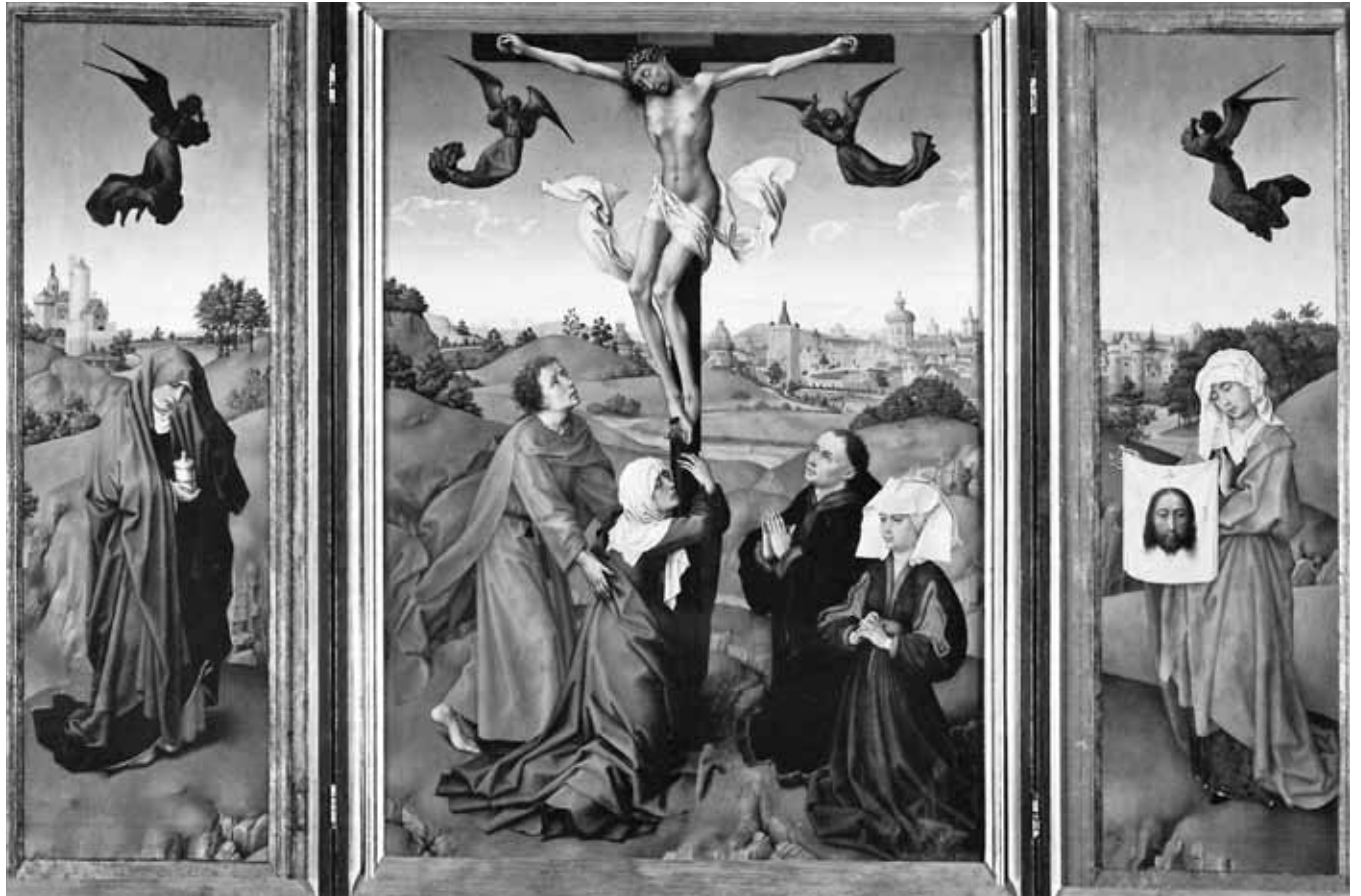


Figure 4. Rogier van der Weyden, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1440. Central panel, 96 x 69 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).

Annibale Carracci fosters devotional gestures in a manner that indicates both his sensitivity to archaic sources and his resistance to overt archaism. In his *Crucifixion* altarpiece the Renaissance experiments are reinscribed and advanced in a dramatic, narrative composition that avoids the conceptual and iconic elements of paintings rigorously adherent to the Counter-Reformation parameters of sacred *istorie*. The primary concern of much post-Tridentine painting gravitated around the demand for narrative clarity and the creation of a liturgical image with the principal holy figure placed in the centre of the composition, and often oriented frontally. Yet even with stylistic adjustments, paintings that reflect such regulations remain conceptual and iconic, rather than dramatic and narrative. The post-Tridentine texts documenting the frontal character of images do not elaborate the matter in post-Albertian terms, namely, *how* a religious figure should be placed in the centre of a composition. Such vagueness is apparent in the writings of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, who as a secretary of state to the pope played a significant role in formulating the decrees of the Council of

Trent.²¹ In his influential *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae libri duo* (began after 1572 and completed in Milan in 1577), in which Borromeo sets out his proposals for the reform of the church, he brings his observations on the frontal character of religious painting into alignment with decorum and the conformity between figure and prototype: “From the bearing, the position, the adornment of the person, the whole expression of sacred images should fittingly and decorously correspond to the dignity and sanctity of their prototypes.”²²

Of course, Cardinal Borromeo was projecting a post-Tridentine predicament back onto the making of early images, an act of restoration clearly motivated by the commitment to see the art of the past in the context of the present. Like Borromeo, the Dominican theologian Giovanni Andrea Gilio, another important representative of religious institutions concerned with the recovery of fundamental elements of venerable image traditions, defended the old cult of images and prized in particular their frontality, which he called their *prosopopeea*.²³ For Gilio, simplicity and directness absorb into a frontally

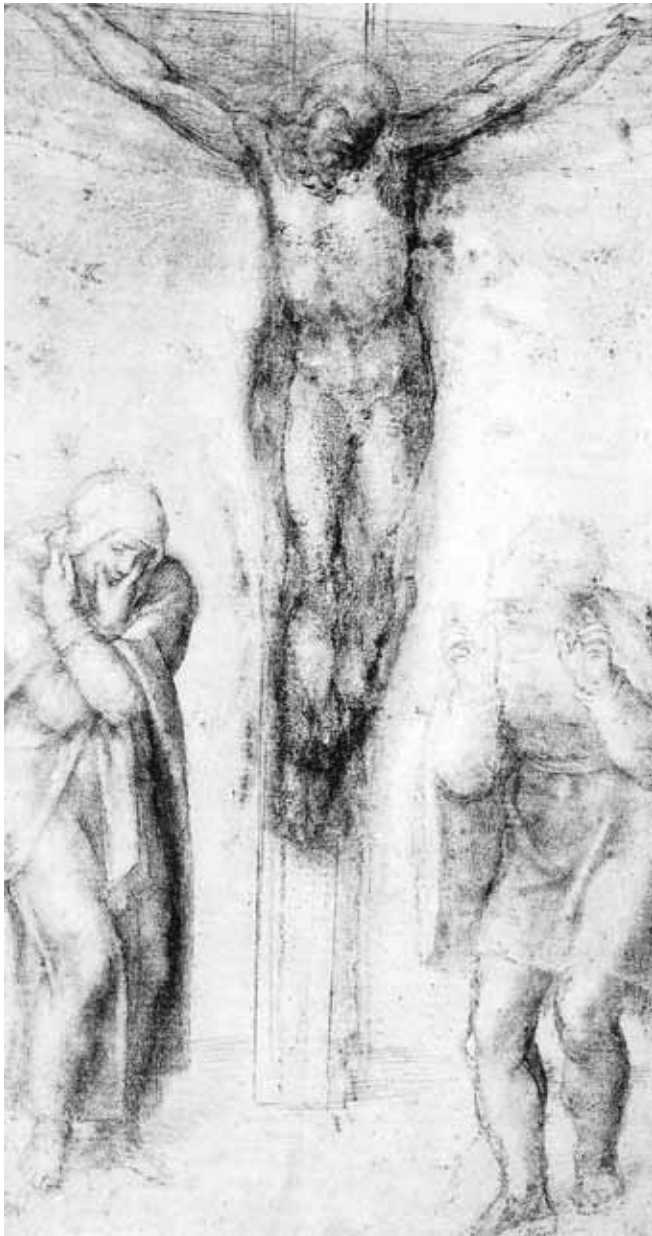


Figure 5. Michelangelo, *Christ on the Cross Between the Virgin and Saint John*, ca. 1562. Drawing in black chalk. Windsor, Windsor Castle, Royal Library (The Royal Collection ©2010, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II).

oriented image as structurally embedded virtues, satisfying the post-Tridentine preoccupation with decorum in religious painting. But compositions that strictly followed decorum only achieved decorous images of saints appropriately disposed and hierarchically arranged, thus returning to the remoteness of Christian art without emulating the aura of authentic religiosity.²⁴ Annibale Carracci inserted his *Crucifixion with Saints*

within archaic concerns with frontally oriented images, yet his solutions remained accessible only to the few post-Tridentine painters determined to advance the hierarchies and symmetries of traditional images while generating a narrative drama. He accomplished the fusion of these two apparently opposed goals by maintaining the frontality of the principal figure while making compelling changes to adjust it to the narrative element. Before examining his narrative solutions through their indebtedness to Renaissance experiments in the arena of altar painting, it is worth drawing on Annibale's most astute critics and their remarks.

When Bellori contrasted his achievements with the lowly, corrupted and debased level of the post-Tridentine age, he alluded to a marginalization of Annibale Carracci by embattled Counter-Reformation historiographers such as Baglione. Bellori clarified his observation in written form only later, in the declining years of the Counter-Reformation during the second half of the seventeenth century. It took Giovanni Previtali, a twentieth-century art historian preoccupied with a continuum of medieval and modern religious images, to aptly stress that an earlier marginal note of Bellori to his copy of Baglione's *Le vite* (1642) would be amply manifested in Bellori's *Vite* that appeared twenty-five years later: "Just as Raphael restored painting to a most beautiful truth, so did Annibale Carracci, and thus Baglione did him wrong in writing so little about him, and numbering him among so many inartistic [*imbrattatele*] painters."²⁵

Although he intended to mend Annibale's reputation damaged by Baglione's account, Bellori's scathing criticism targeted the ineptitude of Counter-Reformation painters. The most striking feature of Bellori's wording is in fact neither his determination to detail the pitfalls of Counter-Reformation art nor his justification for Annibale Carracci's opposing evolution in concert with the art of Raphael. Rather, Bellori's chief interest was to propound in *Idea*, an introductory passage to his *Vite*, that a revival of classical antiquity and its effort to imitate the most elegant beauties of nature informed Annibale Carracci's painting. As Bellori observes in his account of Annibale's life, Renaissance predecessors were merely ushering a path for the classical expression of Annibale's painting: "He attuned himself principally to the sweetness and purity of Correggio's and Titian's power and distribution of colors, and from this latter master's naturalistic imitation he proceeded to the more perfect ideas and the more emended art of the Greeks."²⁶ To make pointed statements that overturn an earlier course of events was Baroque dissimulation, in the service of which Bellori placed his artistic theory of an ideal form rooted in the Greek model. A Baroque courtier and historiographer, Bellori embodies dissimulation in the seventeenth century as a mode of resistance to social, cultural, and religious norms, a practice dialectically linked to an emerging culture of classicist aesthetic.²⁷

Bellori's classical imperatives elaborate the primacy of the Greek model espoused by papal diplomat Giovanni Battista Agucchi in his *Trattato della pittura* (1646), the influence of which is most notable in Bellori's *Idea*. Nevertheless, Bellori's discourse remains largely oblivious of most significant religious debates that contrasted classical beauty with what was termed the "beauty of holiness" in the reform circles of the post-Tridentine decades. Francesco Bocchi's *Opera di M. Francesco Bocchi sopra l'immagine miracolosa della Santissima Annunziata di Firenze* (1592) constitutes a critical moment in the revaluation of the *primitivi* and their attempt to reclaim the achievements of the past for a new age.²⁸ The "beauty of holiness" that Bocchi admired in a number of Renaissance paintings and engravings provided the foil against which he articulated his critique of classical beauty. He targeted in particular the rigorous images adherent to the classical canon at a time when the post-Tridentine emergence of Greco-Roman ideals threatened the integrity and dominance of religious images.

The perception that the art of the Catholic Reform was haunted by a sense of decadence and stricture was voiced as early as 1522 in Northern Europe, in Hieronymus Emser's attack on the Wittenberg iconoclast Andreas Karlstadt.²⁹ In his treatise, Emser adduced the simplicity of old images in support of the strategy of painters who focus the eye on that which is most important in a religious image. Emser's telling conclusion that deliberate choices are propitious to the emergence of true beauty reflects his faith in the artist's capability of raising the religious image beyond didactic function and theological control. Despite such reform-minded views, many ecclesiastical patrons and theorists of the post-Tridentine age demanded the creation of conceptual paintings adherent to a powerfully affecting *istoria*. Yet even with stylistic innovations, such paintings neither recast the traditional cult image as an artifact, nor ensured the creation of dramatic and narrative compositions. Rather, they remained iconic and stable when projecting an older tradition into Counter-Reformation art. The appreciation of post-Tridentine painting by ecclesiastical patrons and theorists was driven less by retrospective articulation of the kind expounded by Annibale Carracci than by mimetic impulse, apparent in frontal compositions with saints symmetrically disposed and hierarchically arranged. Though sensitive to archaic sources, these compositions were prone to overt borrowings or unimaginative reiterations.

As Federico Zeri has recognized, Scipione Pulzone melds altar painting with archaic stylization in his *Crucifixion*, ca. 1585–90 (fig. 6), for the Oratorians at the Roman Church of Santa Maria in Vallicella.³⁰ Even though his *Crucifixion* remains rather inexpressive and laboured, for Zeri, Pulzone deserves credit for having surpassed the fixation with decorum, the classical ideal of fitness to purpose that held sway in the post-Tri-



Figure 6. Scipione Pulzone, *Crucifixion*, 1585–90. Oil on canvas. Rome, Chiesa Nuova (Soprintendenza speciale per il patrimonio storico, artistico ed etnoantropologico e per il polo museale della città di Roma).

dentine decades. Zeri identified in the formal mode of Scipione Pulzone's altarpiece the influence of reforming thought and engagements with the tradition of cult images. Pulzone drove a wedge between realms of religious matter and demands for compositions that favoured decorous images of diagrammatic and symmetrical arrangement. The archaic revivals of the sort visible in the works of Scipione Pulzone and Giuseppe Valeriano were keyed to an inextricable bond between art and devotion.³¹

In post-Tridentine art concerns with the emendation of lascivious images paved the way for decorous and austere rather than devotional and uplifting religious images. Numerous Counter-Reformation artists, in their adherence to the taste



Figure 7. Mattia Preti, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1682–84. Oil on canvas, 233 × 159 cm. Taverna, Church of San Domenico (Soprintendenza regionale).

of their ecclesiastical patrons, found themselves compelled to abandon the motivating ideas of Renaissance art, thereby preventing an absorption of essential accomplishments from the past. By contrast, the perception that the image of Christ should be placed in the center of a composition and oriented frontally is moderated by Scipione Pulzone's *Crucifixion* in a manner that distills archaic sources into a post-Tridentine altarpiece. As Stuart Lingo has reasoned, the archaic stylization in Pulzone's altar painting was most relevantly epitomized by a vocabulary of figural prototypes common to a number of the Crucifixions produced in the decades following the termination of the Council of Trent.³² The archaic quality most accentuated in Pulzone's *Crucifixion* concerns the posture of the Virgin Mary, who recalls the archaic features used by Michelangelo in the female figures of Rachael and Leah on the tomb of Julius II in San Pietro in Vincoli. Little wonder, therefore,

that Pulzone's *Crucifixion* stands as representative of a group of post-Tridentine altarpieces that were created in subsequent decades.³³ As shown in Mattia Preti's *Crucifixion* of 1682–84 (fig. 7) for the Church of San Domenici in Taverna, the painter followed with insignificant changes from Pulzone's model. Preti, who must have seen the Vallicella painting during his Roman stay, was intent on conflating Pulzone's *Crucifixion* and his own colouristic effects adherent to conceptual and decorous images.³⁴ Preti imitated the source thoroughly, making allowances for a style laden with the affective naturalism demanded by his ecclesiastical patrons.

The *Crucifixion with Saints* indicates that Annibale Carracci was increasingly sensitive to archaic sources, while resisting the overt archaism advised by Giovanni Andrea Gilio and Cardinal Carlo Borromeo. He inscribed and advanced the Crucifixion narrative in a manner that emphasized both devotion and drama. The devotional sentiment of the Crucifixion icon was of primary importance to Annibale in his attempt to reclaim the achievements of the past for his reform of altar painting. The beauty of his figural forms, of Christ and the saints, reanimated for a modern age the virtues of Christian devotional images. His Christ and saintly figures may be said to embody a purity of form and authenticity comparable to Michelangelo's late archaic experiments, evolving Renaissance ideas into early modern religious paintings. Like Michelangelo, Annibale Carracci employed figural forms in compositions that are effective extensions of the referential authority of cult images, and are entities to withstand the rhetorical trends of the Baroque.³⁵ While Michelangelo translated the integrity of religious art into a return to sculpture, Annibale understood the icon as key to his reform of altar painting. His archaic references are bound up with compelling narrative solutions in a unique way that made him a reformer and forerunner of the modern age: He preserved the historically embedded form of religious images and at the same time found a new accord between the dictates of traditional cult images and the modern aesthetic experience.

Annibale Carracci enacted reform-minded ideas beyond a simple reiteration of venerable traditions, regarding archaism both as the foundation for modern change and as the preservation of the old that launches a tradition of the new.³⁶ His reforming goals attest to a level of higher complexity than those achieved by contemporaries such as Scipione Pulzone. It is worth examining in this line of argument the response of these two artists to Titian's *Crucifixion* of 1558 (fig. 8) for San Domenico in Ancona. In Annibale's *Crucifixion with Saints* only the frontal form of Christ reminds one of the Renaissance tradition of representing the Crucifixion scene on which Titian based his painting. Beyond the evocation of the iconographic scheme, Annibale intensified gestures and movements in order to lay stress on dramatic and narrative solutions. His response

to an earlier tradition apparent in Titian's Ancona *Crucifixion* was essentially creative, not mimetic. In open contrast to Annibale Carracci, Scipione Pulzone was indulging in archaic stylization in union with piety. His response to Titian was intensely emotive and indebted to a melding of Renaissance drama with post-Tridentine archaic revivals. Such features are most accentuated through his direct borrowings from Titian, in the figure of St. John the Evangelist with outstretched arms and in the pose of the Virgin's hands, which, though clasped together, reflect meditation on the figure of the Virgin in the Ancona *Crucifixion*. No doubt depicting emotions set the occasion for Pulzone's overt imitation of the expressive figure of St. Dominic by Titian in the kneeling posture of Mary Magdalene, who embraces the Cross in a gesture of anguish and prayer.

No one understood archaism better than Annibale Carracci did, and his painting offered a synthesis of Renaissance and clear-eyed reform interests. Always the thorough artist, Annibale steadfastly refused to separate archaism from modernity, making them interlocking concepts detached from the question of conceptual and iconic images that percolated throughout post-Tridentine theoretical discussions. His ability to distill archaic and modern sources into his painting signals a key moment in the development of Renaissance art theory. As Philip Sohm has ably reasoned, art theorists Giovanni Battista Passeri and Giovanni Battista Agucchi and the artist Pietro Testa saw that, in even the most skillful painting, a "good style" represented ancient certainties.³⁷ In the seventeenth-century mentality, too great a variance from classical and ethical norms would weaken the art dangerously. The tenor of the seventeenth-century defense of classical models overturned the critique of stony (*di porfireo*) styles initiated in Ludovico Dolce's attack on Quattrocento painters and Michelangelo.³⁸ For Dolce, hard styles resulted from imitating the ancient simplicity of statues and also from emulating too closely one model only. Although castigated by Dolce as mimetic and monotonous, such a hardness of style was an attribute of ancient simplicity and a quality associated by Cicero and Quintilian with the nobility of statues.³⁹ It is worth recalling that Annibale steered a course between the rhetorical bent of Dolce's critique of ancient artifacts and the unreserved praise of classical antiquity apparent in seventeenth-century theoretical positions. Annibale was famous for some verbal retorts, including an illuminating one on his appreciation of Correggio's purity and naturalness: "I like this clarity [in Correggio], I like this purity that is real, not lifelike, is natural, not artificial or forced; everyone interprets it in his own way, I see it this way: I can't express it, but I know what I must do and that's enough."⁴⁰ Indeed, Annibale's taste for Correggio struck a blow at the perception that simplicity and purity associate with a lesser style, and his opinion appears amply manifested in El Greco's written annotations on Vasari's *Lives*.



Figure 8. Titian, *Crucifixion*, 1558. Oil on canvas, 371 x 197 cm. Ancona, San Domenico (Scala, Florence).

It seems no coincidence that El Greco's astute observation that Correggio revived interest in ancient beauty without imitating any classical grandeur is the counterpart of Annibale's praise of Correggio and the beauty of natural forms.⁴¹

The process leading to Annibale Carracci's reform-minded solutions was marked by successive altarpiece paradigms and a critical, ongoing dialogue with the work of Michelangelo. Past experiments in Crucifixion altarpieces were Northern Italian in character, and belonged to the late medieval period. They took shape in innovative solutions in altarpiece design that were destined to reconcile dramatic pictorial devices with the conventions of altar painting. The powerful model proposed by Rogier van der Weyden's response to the work of Fra Angelico, after the former's pilgrimage to Rome for the jubilee year of 1450, registered an awareness of the multiplicity of altarpiece paradigms and cross-cultural exchange. Alexander Nagel has argued that the adaptations of van der Weyden from Fra Angel-



Figure 9. Giovanni Bellini, *Assumption with Saints*, ca. 1513. Panel, 350 x 225 cm. Venice, Murano, San Pietro Martire (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Venice).

ico's paintings, whether or not based on Rogier's independent knowledge of the Italian tradition, initiated an implicit critique of Robert Campin's and Gentile da Fabriano's excessive pictorial narratives.⁴² Aby Warburg's specific conclusions on van der Weyden were products of the same awareness that Italian altar painting unveils a Netherlandish sensitivity in the rendition of devotional themes, as in the art of Ghirlandaio, for example.⁴³ I argue that the apprehension of historical altarpiece styles in the early modern period was built on the possibility that an exchange of Italian and Netherlandish experiments could be both a powerful testimony to early Christian art and at the same time a substitutional model for novel creations. As evidence suggests, Netherlandish altar painting reverberates with a tragic narrative involving a subtle negotiation between the dictates of naturalism and an adherence to the sacramental significance of Christ's sacrifice. The resourceful solutions to preserve the mystery of

Christ's presence entailed new pictorial conditions that merged with the conception of an immutable, uninterrupted historical sequence of events. The figural representation of Christ, the *figura* in Erich Auerbach's terms, appears as being of all times and above all historical occurrence, thus sustaining a whole system of altarpiece production that ensured the faithful, yet creative transmission of prototypes.

It is worth inquiring how awareness of Northern painting was transmitted to the next generations of Italian artists, and how with the development of altar painting an interrelation of Netherlandish and local traditions effectively informed early modern religious art in Italy. I restrict my investigation here to an examination of iconicity that in dramatic compositions heightens devotional participation while fostering the narrative element. Van der Weyden furnished a compelling solution to the Crucifixion scene in his central panel of the Vienna *Crucifixion*, wherein a symmetrical and gaze-coordinated arrangement around the Cross sheds light on the Mother of God. The Virgin Mary grasps the base of the Cross in a passionate embrace, an act of prostration and an imitation of Christ's passion and humility. Van der Weyden casts her profound awareness of the body of Christ in the wind-blown movement of Christ's shroud, a pictorial metaphor meant to intensify the appearance of the Cross within the altarpiece. The Netherlandish painter makes a convincing claim for the complementarity between devotional gesture and dramatic detail as an expressive means of advancing the Crucifixion narrative. This was a resourceful narrative solution to inscribe the sacramental significance of Christ's sacrifice within new pictorial conditions.

Annibale Carracci pursued in his *Crucifixion with Saints* the direction laid out by his Renaissance predecessor, and his determination to expand the dramatic register of his altarpiece by amplifying the devotional gesture of each character may be said to continue van der Weyden's paradigmatic discourse. Always the modern artist, Annibale Carracci was preoccupied with an interrelation of icon and narrative that both maintains and develops past experiments. Van der Weyden's resoluteness to conform dramatic and narrative compositions to the icon provided the next generations of painters with meaningful ways to develop the *istoria* beyond the excessive pictorial narratives of many Italian Renaissance artists.⁴⁴ All the more, in the post-Tridentine decades the concerns of a painter of religious subjects gravitated around the frontal character of images and how this deliberate archaic feature projected into dramatic and modern *istorie*. Yet painters exceeded a simple restating of venerable images, opting instead for pictorial means in accordance with the aim of the new antiquarianism, of the sort recommended by Cardinal Cesare Baronio, to construct religious images that matched the archeological evidence of ancient life. Elizabeth Eisenstein's observation that the sight of paintings after Trent

constituted a source of religious illumination far from the Renaissance conception draws attention to the daunting task of the artist.⁴⁵ In other words, the theorists' strictures were an articulation of a theory of painting as an authorial performance. As might be expected from one of the major figures of the period, Annibale Carracci constantly returned to the ultimate effort for a post-Tridentine painter, namely, the creation of sacred *istorie*, yet he appeared chiefly concerned with removing the signs of contemporaneity from religious images. His work documents a successful struggle to resolve the use of radical devices by vying with his Renaissance predecessors for distinctive means of advancing religious painting and at the same time questioning an age abounding in rules.

The appeal of icons as images outside of time and place represented for Annibale Carracci a potent reminder of Renaissance experiments. In the Murano *Assumption with Saints* of 1513 (fig. 9), Giovanni Bellini grappled with the problem of the Maria Assunta holding the frontal field of the panel above a group of saints who do not belong to the Assumption. Bellini's efforts to preserve the frontal character of the icon in a narrative context is resolved with a rational explanation of how saints could be present at the Assumption when historically they were not. The detail of the mitre of a bishop saint overlapping the cloud carrying Mary to heaven places the bishop in front of Mary, although he looks up as if he were behind her. Bellini adapted an image of the past to the evidence of his painted narrative. That was far from the conception of icons as images beyond time and space, and was a logistical adjustment demanded by his pictorial necessities. His efforts were essentially geared towards developing the *istoria* while maintaining Mary in the center of the composition. In so doing, Bellini overcame earlier reductions of the narrative element in iconic paintings. In the *Lamentation* of the late fifteenth century (fig. 10) by the school of Domenico Ghirlandaio in Badia a Settimo, the Lamentation scene is set behind the kneeling saints, thus creating a spatial paradox that differs fundamentally from Bellini's use of icons in a narrative context. The more static scheme that results when saints are emphasized in the altarpiece foreground and placed in front of Christ or his Mother entails the reduction of the narrative element.

In his *Crucifixion with Saints* Annibale Carracci was seeking to maintain the discontinuities of time and space evoked by icons by diversifying action and devotional movement within a pictorial composition centered around Christ. This constituted both a potent reminder of the past's discontinuity with the present that was the hallmark of the Renaissance and a renewed awareness of painting as a substitutional conception in the early modern age. Annibale Carracci broadened the Renaissance endeavour to the point that it met the needs of retrospective articulation of the icon, and he also laid the basis for a histor-



Figure 10. Domenico Ghirlandaio (school), *Lamentation*, late fifteenth century. Panel, 147 x 141 cm. Badia a Settimo, Sant' Apollonia. (Archivi Alinari, Badia a Settimo).



Figure 11. Michelangelo, *Entombment*, ca. 1500. Panel, 162 x 150 cm. London, National Gallery (National Gallery, London).

*This image cannot be posted online due to copyright restrictions. The Correggio image is available on wikipedia at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Correggio_004.jpg*

Figure 12. Correggio, *Holy Night*, 1522–30. Panel, 256.5 × 188 cm. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden).

ical understanding of the Crucifixion as reflected in medieval devotional practices. His narrative draws attention to the dramatic attitude of all the saints engaged in contemplation and grouped together with Christ within the same pictorial plan. Such a close-up view aimed at maintaining temporal distance transgresses the boundaries between narration and contemplation. Narrators and contemplators of the Crucifixion, the saints summarize the eye of Annibale Carracci who paints the image and, at the same time, visualizes in his mind an icon of the Crucified Christ.

His innovations primarily concern an altarpiece design that develops the narrative element while emphasizing the value of the cult image, reinvested with the contemplative aspect appropriate to an altar image. In the *Crucifixion with Saints* the body of Christ is reinscribed as an image for veneration and contemplation in a manner that maintains the discontinuities between cult image and anachronistic presence. The fusion of

narrative and image has been moderated in a manner that no longer incorporates aspects of an overt narrative drama that made the Renaissance Crucifixion an excruciating image; rather, Christ occupies the center of the image and is the focus of a devotional activity comparable to the prayer addressed to an icon. The imperative to fuse mystery and anachronism into altar painting may also explain the notable insistence on grouping the saints on both sides of the Cross. What Annibale produced was a modern interpretation of the traditional Crucifixion that maintains icon and narrative in a harmonious equilibrium, an image akin to the Byzantine Crucifixion and its appeal to religious practice. Robin Cormack describes the icon as a meditation on Christ and a visual “reading” of the religious sentiment of texts, experienced by both painters and viewers: “Both the producers and the viewers of icons were part of the same religious world, which saw references to the Gospels elsewhere. The icon is indeed art, but it is also representative of a way of life.”⁴⁶

To stress the meaning and significance of the depicted event Annibale Carracci revived traditional pictorial devices. At the same time, he cast aside the unities of time and action so treasured by the post-Tridentine fixation with decorum. According to the dictates of many ecclesiastical figures and theorists, a single episode in time must be confined to a single framed piece and consistent with place and narrative, in accordance with the classical fitness to purpose, or decorum.⁴⁷ Annibale put a vigorous, penetrating drama to work in a new direction, characterizing the saints according to their implication in the dramatic level and their devotional response, rather than their hierarchically and symmetrically disposed arrangement. He varied the movement of his figures to differentiate them according to their response to the central event, the Crucifixion. The manner in which he pointed to the discontinuities of time and action is reminiscent of Michelangelo’s meditation on the icon mode transferred to the altarpiece practice, apparent in his London *Entombment*, ca. 1500–01 (fig. 11). Michelangelo brought a new conception of narrative painting into alignment with the concept of frontality in the altarpiece. In the London *Entombment* the frontal orientation and symmetrical structure interfere with the impression of movement, yet the carrying of Christ towards the viewer contradicts the backwards movements of the figures.⁴⁸ The varied dramatic movements of the carriers are gestures to remove the signs of narrative action as responses to the entombment scene, stressing Michelangelo’s objection to the unity of time and space and consistency of movement and theme that were keyed to decorous images. Annibale may have had exposure to Michelangelo’s altarpiece during his Roman sojourn, when the *Entombment* was still in the possession of the friars at the Church of San’ Agostino, the commissioning source.

The *Crucifixion with Saints* indicates that Annibale Carracci resisted overt archaism while evolving Renaissance sources into the pictorial themes and subjects of modern altar painting. His determination to assimilate narrative action to the referential, authoritative power of icons affirms a mark of identity distinct from the temporary punctual discourse of the Counter-Reformation. His Emilian predecessor Correggio provided an unparalleled model for dramatic *istorie* that departed from the classicist leanings of the Roman school, which was setting pictorial norms for generations of painters. Correggio was engaged in defining himself in relation to Rome by both continuing and departing from the art of antiquity, as Stephen Campbell has recognized.⁴⁹ The rise of the new Renaissance modern manner of the papal court, epitomized by the art of Raphael, was resisted by Correggio, who created a powerful style founded on his Emilian context and his antique themes that look detached from the Roman art of antiquity. We find Correggio offering a fitting conclusion to a series of biblical and mythological themes circulated in the Emilian artistic and intellectual circles at the turn of the sixteenth century. Correggio's ideas declared the intensity of the religious theme, which attested to the importance with which a translation into pictorial language of one of the most significant developments of sixteenth-century Christian humanism, a *pietas interiorizzata* or the local expression of the wider movement of *devotio moderna*, was blended with the private devotional life of Northern Europe.⁵⁰ Emilia registered a *pietas interiorizzata*, which emerged from the Erasmian doctrine of *eruditio* and *pietas* that was circulated within Italian reformed quarters in close kinship with the Protestant North.⁵¹

In pictorial terms such a rich native source presaged a new narrative direction in Correggio's altar painting. John Shearman has located the essence of Correggio's dramatic solutions in the pairing of a heightened devotion and suppressed anecdotal detail.⁵² In the *Holy Night* of 1522–30 (fig. 12), in a low viewpoint composition of startling impression of access, anachronistic participants form a dramatically cohesive framework for the image of the Virgin adoring the Child. Correggio was intent on fostering the *istoria* of the Nativity by including the characters in both a traditional and a reformed Adoration scheme. Most conspicuously, St. Jerome and the women in the left foreground do not belong to the Gospel, yet their presence appears legitimate when summoned up in a devotional context that supplements the written account.

Correggio's example to emphasize dramatic narrative in order to highlight significance and meaning helped Annibale Carracci pursue a path of his own. The *Holy Night* undoubtedly drew his careful scrutiny in its original setting at the basilica of San Prospero in Reggio Emilia, where Annibale's *St. Roch Distributing Alms* was to be installed briefly in 1595.⁵³ His predecessor's handling of light and surfaces, the warm tones, and

the mystical mood is comparable to Annibale's modern sensibility. It is also significant that Annibale was abreast of Correggio's newest schemes wherein devout overtones prevail at the expense of anecdotal elements. The *Crucifixion with Saints* is purged of any detail that may distract devotional attention from the veneration directed to the Cross, as well as of any implicit aspects that made the Renaissance Crucifixion a narrative of excruciating detail.

In the *Crucifixion with Saints* Annibale shares Correggio's interest in evocative gestures that capture the emotional efficacy of religious painting—not the stylistic blandishments of the modern manner. Charles Dempsey has noted in the style of the *Crucifixion* a successful attempt to emend the provincialism of the Emilian *maniera devota*, which registered at the same time the prevailing influence of Rome and Vasari's *terza maniera*.⁵⁴ The logical conclusions of such a thesis is that Carracci “reformed” by lending his ear to Vasari's critique of the provincial character of Emilian painting. Be that as it may, Annibale's attack on Vasari's ideas in his annotations to the second edition of the *Lives* is famous for showing a high degree of commonality with Federico Zuccari's and El Greco's criticisms of Vasari.⁵⁵ Given that their criticisms are directed at Vasari's portrayals of Bellini and Titian, it is safe to conclude that Vasari's *terza maniera* and stylistic invention did not draw the attention of painters of religious images such as Annibale Carracci, Federico Zuccari, and El Greco. They were modern artists particularly concerned with furthering the post-Albertian sacred *istoria* expressed in narrative and in dramatic ways, while constructing images of the past that sustain a substitutional conception of the icon's place in time. Such an engagement made radical changes to the frontal character of images for the sake of adapting the religious aura to the narrative element. Efforts to surpass the commissioners' desire for decorous images are characteristic of Federico Zuccari's altarpieces, as illustrated by his *The Encounter of Christ and Veronica on the Way to Calvary* from 1594, still in situ at the Roman Basilica of St. Prassede. Located in the Olgiati Chapel right across from the San Zeno Chapel, whose dome restates the Byzantine tradition in which the center is occupied by the medallion of Christ Pantocrator as the most significant part of the subject narrative,⁵⁶ Zuccari's painting may be seen as an altarpiece reinterpretation of the directed center of Byzantine architecture. While Federico Zuccari's *The Encounter of Christ and Veronica on the Way to Calvary* upholds a carefully conceived compositional order as the painting's closest analogy to an iconic composition, El Greco was determined to subvert most strict pictorial parameters. His *Martyrdom of St. Maurice* of 1580–82, at the Monastery of El Escorial in Spain, is a powerful *istoria* that fuses icon and narrative in a manner that emphasizes the discontinuities of time and action. Such a rendition, courageously novel but otherwise profoundly

archaic, departs from frontally oriented compositions in order to advance the dramatic core of the sacred *istoria*. The icon vogue of the post-Tridentine decades prompted a rediscovery, repetition, and amplification of the narrative core of the icon, thus restaging venerable sources of prayer and meditation within the early modern age.

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Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Eisenstein sheds light on the Reformation critique of Baroque ceremonies and commissions as external manifestations of the Catholic faith in *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (London, New York, and Melbourne, 1979), I, 24, 144, 170–71, 310. The author recently fortified these ideas in “Seeing Images and Hearing Texts: Modes of Worship in Early Modern England,” *Image, Text and Church 1380–1600: Essays for Margaret Aston*, eds. Linda Clark, Maureen Jurkowski, and Colin Richmond (Toronto, 2009), 203–13, esp. 206.
- 2 Both Count Cesare Malvasia’s *Felsina pittrice, vite de’ pittori Bolognesi*, first published in 1678, and Giovan Pietro Bellori’s most famous work, published in Rome in 1672 under the title *Le vite de’ pittori, scultori et architetti moderni...parte prima*, stress Carracci’s reform of painting that breaks free from Giovanni Baglione’s assessment of his work in *Vite*. Hereafter, references will be to Giovan Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de’ pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, ed. E. Borea, with an introduction by G. Previtali (Turin, 1976), and to the recent edition, Giovan Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. by Alice Sedgwick Wohl, notes by Helmut Wohl and introduction by Tomaso Montanari (Cambridge, 2005). Published in 1642, Baglione’s *Vite* primarily treats artists who worked in Rome. Bellori’s contribution to Baglione’s *Vite* and his remark “ora non mi piace niente” (now I don’t like this at all) are mentioned by Previtali in his introduction to *Le vite de’ pittori*, XVIII, and will be discussed within this article and in notes 25 and 26.
- 3 Donald Posner, “The Reform of Religious Painting,” *Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting around 1590*, 2 vols. (London, 1971), I, 35–43. S.J. Freedberg, *Circa 1600: A Revolution of Style in Italian Painting* (Cambridge and London, 1983), 29–30. Charles Dempsey, “The Carracci Reform of Painting,” *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci: Emilian Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Washington, New York, and Bologna, 1986), 237–55. Clare Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci* (Milano, 2008).
- 4 E.H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London, 1970), 143–45. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London, 1994), 261–67.
- 5 Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge, 2000), 199.
- 6 Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge, 1995), 89, 281–82. Erich Cochrane, *Historians and Historiographers in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), 462.
- 7 Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History*, 103. Francis Haskell notes that Cardinal Baronio preferred to draw on visual evidence only when it was mediated by a written authority. See Francis Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, 1993), 103.
- 8 F. Haskell, *History and its Images*, 122. As recorded in his *Annales*, Cardinal Baronio was in fact more impressed by the subterranean aspect of the catacombs than by the art he found there. See *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 12 vols. (first ed., Rome, 1588–1607; Antwerp, 1597–1609), II, 81.
- 9 Sixten Ringbom has examined Armenini’s critique of the Italo-Byzantine icons acquired during the preceding centuries. See Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting* (Doornspijk, Netherlands, 1984), 43–45. On Vasari’s use of the words *goffo* and *rozzo* in reference to ancient images, see Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven, 1995), 281–84.
- 10 As Robin Cormack has stressed, the icon identified itself with the Christian faith to the extent that “from 843 onwards, to deny the icon was to deny the identity of the Orthodox believer.” See Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks, and Shrouds* (London, 1997), 46.
- 11 Sylvia Ferino Pagden, “From cult images to the cult of images: the case of Raphael’s altarpieces,” *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Peter Humfrey and Martin Kemp (Cambridge, 1990), 165–89.
- 12 Elisabeth Gleason, *Reform Thought in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Chico, 1981), 103.
- 13 Giancarla Periti, “Nota sulla ‘maniera moderna’ di Correggio a Parma,” *Parmigianino e il manierismo europeo*, Atti del Convegno

- internazionale di studi, Parma 13–15 giugno 2002, ed. Lucia Fornari Schianchi (Milan, 2002), 298–303.
- 14 Belting, “Religion and Art: The Crisis of the Image at the Beginning of the Modern Age,” *Likeness and Presence*, esp. 484–90.
- 15 Giovanni Previtali, *La Fortuna dei Primitivi: Dal Vasari ai Neoclassici*, introd. Enrico Castelnuovo (Turin, 1962), 124–25.
- 16 Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, “What counted as an ‘Antiquity’ in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Medievalisms*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto, 2009), 53–74, esp. 60–61.
- 17 Diane DeGrazia Bohlin, *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Washington, 1979), 422.
- 18 Aby Warburg’s ideas on the Netherlandish inflections of Italian altar paintings bore fruit in Jean Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (New Haven and London, 2000), 8; and Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, 18.
- 19 Nagel, “Sculpture as Relic,” *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, esp. 202–12.
- 20 Paul Joannides, “‘Primitivism’ in the Late Drawings of Michelangelo: The Master’s Construction of an Old-Age Style,” *Michelangelo Drawings*, *Studies in the History of Art*, 33, ed. Craig Hugh Smith (Washington, 1992), 245–61, esp. 253.
- 21 Erich Cochrane, “Counter Reformation or Tridentine Reformation? Italy in the Age of Carlo Borromeo,” *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. John M. Headley and John B. Tamaro (London and Toronto, 1988), 31–46, esp. 32–34.
- 22 Carole Evelyn Walker, *Charles Borromeo’s “Instructiones Fabricae et Suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae,” 1577: a Translation with Commentary and Analysis* (Michigan, 1977), 229.
- 23 G.A. Gilio, *Due dialoghi, nel primo de’quali si ragiona de le parti morali e civili appartenenti a’ letterati cortigiani...nel secondo si ragiona degli errori de’pittori circa l’historie* (Camerino, 1564), in *Trattati d’arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, 3 vols., ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari, 1961), II, 55–56.
- 24 On the definition and critique of decorum, see Philip Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 2001), 101; and Thomas Puttfarcken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400–1800* (New Haven and London, 2000), 171–73.
- 25 Bellori, *Le vite de’ pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, XII, note 3: “An. Caracci fu restauratore della Pittura già mancata e perduta nel suo secolo, e dopo Rafaele il mondo non ha veduto magro Pittore di lui al quale in molte cose si può paragonare, perché ancora Rafaele restituì la Pittura ad una bellissima verità, così fece An. Caracci, laonde il Baglione gli ha fatto torto a scriverne cosé poco, e porlo nel numero di tanti imbrattatele.”
- 26 Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 2005, 99.
- 27 Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 2009), 26, 45. On dissimulation as a fleeting and final backward glance at the greatness of Italy before its decline into absolutism and cultural marginality, see Giancarlo Mazzacurati, *Il Rinascimento dei moderni. Le crisi culturale del XVIe secolo e la negazione delle origini* (Bologna, 1985), 149–235.
- 28 Zigmunt Ważbiński, “Il modus semplice: un dibattito sull’ars sacra fiorentina intorno al 1600,” *Studi su Raffaello*, ed. M.S. Hamoud and M.L. Strocchi, 2 vols. (Urbino, 1987), I, 625–49. Francesco Bocchi’s *Opera...sopra l’image miracolosa della Santissima Annunziata di Firenze* was published in 1592, one year after his *Le Bellezze della Città di Fiorenza*.
- 29 Bryan D. Mangrum and Giuseppe Scavizzi, eds. and trans., *A Reformation Debate: Karlstadt, Emser and Eck on Sacred Images. Three Treatises in Translation* (Ottawa and Toronto, 1991), 86.
- 30 Federico Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma: L’arte senza tempo’ di Scipione da Gaeta* (Turin, 1957), 80.
- 31 Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma*, 29–30.
- 32 Stuart Lingo, *Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting* (New Haven and London, 2008), 28.
- 33 Iris Krick, *Römische Altarbildmalerei zwischen 1563 und 1605* (Tausenstein, 2002), 267–92.
- 34 John T. Spike, *Mattia e Gregorio Preti a Taverna. Catalogo Completo delle opere* (Taverna, 1997), 97–98.
- 35 Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (Chicago and London, 2008), 12, 244.
- 36 Livia Stoenescu, “The Visual Narratives of El Greco, Annibale Carracci and Rubens: Altarpieces of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the Early Modern Age,” PhD diss., Queen’s University, 2009, 4, 117.
- 37 Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*, 23.
- 38 Mark W. Roskill, *Dolce’s Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (Toronto and London, 2000), esp. 24, on Dolce’s popularization of an “aesthetic” as opposed to an “ethical” or “formal” concept of beauty. See also Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*, 29.
- 39 Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*, 32–33.
- 40 See Annibale Carracci’s letter to Ludovico, 28 April 1580, in G. Perini, ed., *Gli Scritti dei Carracci* (Bologna, 1990), 152–53.
- 41 Xavier de Sales and Fernando Marias, eds., *El Greco y el Arte de su Tiempo: Las Notas de El Greco a Vasari* (Madrid, 1992), 81.
- 42 Nagel, “Rogier van der Weyden and the Northern Man of Sorrows,” *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, 61–70, esp. 62–63.
- 43 Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, 112–27.
- 44 Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, 63–64.
- 45 Eisenstein, *Image, Text and Church 1380–1600*, 209–11.
- 46 Robin Cormack, *Icons* (London, 2007), 109.

- ⁴⁷ On symmetrical order and the regulations of the Council of Trent, see Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 171–73, on Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagini...* (1582), ch. XXVIII, wherein Cardinal Paleotti, Archbishop of Bologna, formulates a definition of the picture based on symmetrical order of the centre and the sides, meant to achieve a proportioned whole.
- ⁴⁸ Alexander Nagel, "Michelangelo, Raphael and the Altarpiece Tradition," PhD diss., Harvard University, 1993, 9–16.
- ⁴⁹ Stephen Campbell, "Mantegna's Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation 'all'antica' at the Court of Mantua, 1490–1530," in Campbell, *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300–1500* (Boston, 2005), 91–105, esp. 101.
- ⁵⁰ Periti, "Nota sulla 'maniera moderna' di Correggio a Parma," 301.
- ⁵¹ Susana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia 1520–1580* (Turin, 1987).
- ⁵² John Shearman, *Only connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J., 1988), 220.
- ⁵³ Harald Marx et al., eds. *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Dresden. Die Ausgestellten Werke* (Cologne, 2005), 78, 88.
- ⁵⁴ Charles Dempsey, "The Carracci and the Devout Style in Emilia," *Sixteenth-Century Italian Art*, ed. Michael W. Cole (Malden and Oxford, 2006), 388–42.
- ⁵⁵ Zuccari's, Annibale Carracci's and El Greco's criticisms of Vasari have been treated separately; see Michel Hochmann, "Les annotations marginales de Federico Zuccari à un exemplaire des Vies de Vasari: La réaction anti-vasariene à la fin du XVIe siècle," *Revue de l'Art* 80 (1988): 67–71; Mario Fanti, "Le postille carracesche alle Vite del Vasari: il testo originale," *Il Carrobbio* 5 (1979): 148–64; de Sales and Marias, eds., *El Greco y el Arte de su Tiempo*. For a summary of these discussions, see Stoenescu, "The Visual Narratives of El Greco, Annibale Carracci and Rubens," ch. II, 70–73.
- ⁵⁶ Shearman, "Domes," *Only Connect...*, esp. 158–59.