FLESH AS RELIC:

PAINTING EARLY CHRISTIAN FEMALE MARTYRS

WITHIN BAROQUE SACRED SPACES

by

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ABSTRACT

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* (1608) in Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, Syracuse, Domenichino Zampieri's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* (1614) in San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, and Giovanni Francesco Barbieri's *Burial of Saint Petronilla* (1623) in Saint Peter's Basilica, are remarkable Baroque depictions of Early Christian female martyrs which illustrate a tendency toward establishing a dialogue between the expiring or lifeless body of the saint and her own venerated grave or relic. Eschewing the requirements and textual authority laid down by the Council of Trent, which prompts the theatrical and violent imaging of saints and martyrs, each piece exhibits a juxtaposition of martyred female body, earth, and altar that transcends naturalist and classicist aesthetics. Rather than offering a dramatization of a saint's life or martyrdom, each artist chose to render a funeral scene directly and with minimal distractions. In the intersection of the traditional veneration of relics and Counter-Reformatory developments in the veneration of martyrs and gendered behavior in church, the following thesis will suggest that each artist rendered the transformation of mortal flesh to saintly relic in order to facilitate the contemplation of the martyred female body implicit in the veneration of saints without transgressing gendered relations within sacred spaces.

INTRODUCTION

During the seventeenth century, religious artwork was tasked with more than decoration or facilitating meditation. Although saints were exhaustively portrayed well before the Baroque period, they were never represented so realistically or gruesomely due to a new emphasis in Christianity on viewer identification with the circumstances of martyrdom. Whether naturalistic or idealistic, a theatrical approach was employed to represent scenes of martyrdom intended to stimulate contemplation. While portrayals of male martyrs during the Baroque period often are typified by dynamic compositions and climactic action, those of female martyrs seem to have required quiet solemnity before a final passing. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* (1608) (figure 1) in Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, Syracuse, Domenichino Zampieri's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* (1614) (figure 2) in San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, and Giovanni Francesco Barbieri's *Burial of Saint Petronilla* (1623) (figure 3) in Saint Peter's Basilica, are remarkable Baroque depictions of Early Christian female martyrs which establish a dialogue between the expiring or lifeless body of the saint and her own venerated grave or relic. Eschewing the requirements and textual authority laid down by the Council of Trent, each piece exhibits a surprising lack expected of narrative content that transcends naturalist and classicist aesthetics. Rather than offering a dramatization of a saint's life or martyrdom, each artist chose to render a funeral scene directly and with minimal distractions. Caravaggio and Guercino represented the corpses of Saint Lucy and Saint Petronilla, respectively, being lowered into their earthen graves while Domenichino rendered Cecilia expiring on the floor attended to by clergy and pilgrims. A quietness is

discernable amongst the three pieces which seems appropriate for the veneration of a grave or relic. This indicates the three pieces spoke more to the formalized ritual that constitutes veneration than the circumstances of the saint's martyrdom.

Each artist created a dialogue between the represented body of the saint, their actual grave or relic, and the altar for the edification of the viewer-worshipper. Caravaggio weighted the composition towards the bottom so the figures would be closer to the altar and the grave below, forcing the viewer to follow the heavenly light downward to the painted figures and human remains. Domenichino arranges his figures in a solemn procession relieved by dramatic gestures that ultimately direct the viewer toward the altar existing on a wall perpendicular to the painting. Guercino crisscrossed his composition with two figural groups which permit witnesses to interact with the body of the saint and Christ to receive the beautified soul of the saint in heaven, so that the viewer's gaze is led by degrees through the painted figures to the relic in the altar.

Allusions death, relics, and ritual in the paintings are appropriate as it is their ultimate sacrifice which defines these women as martyrs worthy of veneration. However, the near eclipse of signs of life or struggle is interesting especially in communication with an altar at ground level as opposed to a vault or dome above. The connection between body, earth, and altar seems to reference the Transubstantiation conceit in which the body of Christ would be visually present in a painting of his deposition or entombment as if reenacting the miracle of divine flesh made bread in the ritual of the Mass. However, this visual play is specific to the male body and even more specific to the body of Christ. An

iconographical link between a female corpse, grave, and altar seems unprecedented and implies a new emphasis on female saints in the ritual of the Mass and weekly devotionals.

Although a militant quality in the portrayal of male saints is consistent throughout the seventeenth century, an analysis of the imaged dead or dying female saint in relation to the active or empowered man remains largely unexplored. An investigation of the juxtaposition of female martyr, earth, and altar will require iconographical analysis of the painting, religious history of rituals facilitating the veneration of martyrs, and social history of seventeenth century parishioners.

This thesis will provide a visual, iconographical, and contextual analysis for Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy*, Domenichino's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and Guercino's *Burial of Saint Petronilla*, with a sensitivity to the conventions of Italian Baroque art, the grave or relic of each martyr, the church ritual, and women's viewership in early modern communities. It will propose that all three pieces rendered the transformed state of womanly flesh to saintly relic in order to facilitate the veneration of women without transgressing gendered behaviors within sacred spaces. The following chapters will offer an analysis of the three altarpieces in terms of Counter-Reformatory martyr cults and relics, church spaces and ceremony and the role of women in relation to these images during the seventeenth century.

BAROQUE PAINTING CONVENTIONS: STYLISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF TRIDENTINE REQUIREMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS ART

Baroque Classicism and Naturalism

The Baroque period in Rome (1600-1750) is often characterized by limitations. The overwhelming majority of artwork produced was in service of religious authorities bent on inspiring multitudes of faithful. Between the formal requirements imposed on art in terms of church and papal patronage and local clerical policing in accordance with Tridentine guidelines, it would not be surprising if artists felt pressured to compromise their unique visions for art. Yet there is incredible originality and creativity even in the most regulated religious artworks of the period due to artists' habituation to working within the constraints of a commission. Caravaggio employed what could be called "aesthetic radicalism" in terms of images of violent, heroic saints rendered in extreme naturalism. The Carracci and their followers employed aesthetic innovation fusing of Florentine *disegno*, Parmese *sfumato*, and Venetian *colore* for peaceful, meditative Virgin and Child images rendered with softening idealism. The following chapter will provide a formal and conceptual analysis of *Burial of Saint Lucy* by Caravaggio, *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* by Domenichino, and *Burial of Saint Petronilla* by Guercino. It will do so by examining the Council of Trent's guidelines for the reform of the arts, discussing the two ways that these guidelines could be satisfied by naturalist and classicist painters, and comparing the unique way in which followers adapted these aesthetics to their own ends.

All three altarpieces were completed during the Early Baroque period (1600-1625). This sub-period, defined by 20th century scholar, Rudolf Wittkower, is marked by the mastery and refinement of the tenants laid out for church decoration by the Council of Trent in December of 1563. The convocation of clergy in the alpine town of Trent was established during the pontificate of Pius IV (1559-65). In order to escape corrupt practices in Rome, clergy held regular convocations in Trent from 1545-1563. In response to the growing Protestant movement, the Council was tasked with addressing the corruptions within the church and the growing criticism from outside. In an effort to address outside criticism and homogenize the Catholic interpretation of the faith, no detail was free of scrutiny. From official modes of validating relics, to the editing of doctrine, every aspect of the Catholic faith; material and philosophical was finely tuned with the goal of retaining parishioners loyal to the Catholic faith and to the institution of the papacy. [1]

The Tridentine address to the arts, although brief against the scope of the Counter-Reformation, was successful in regulating the aesthetic of religious art for the following century and a half. It was thought that Mannerist art rendered sacred subjects too vague, obscure, and sometimes lewd for the benefit of common people. Tridentine proceedings called for religious art to assume an educational and enticing role. Three requirements are credited for the aesthetic and conceptual qualities of the Baroque period in Europe.

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[1] H.J. Schroeder, "Twenty-Fifth Session," in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishing Inc, 1941)

Rudolf Wittkower aptly summarized Giovanni Andrea Gilio's 1560's commentary concerning the Tridentine decrees pertaining to church decoration into three parts being: clarity, realistic interpretation, and emotional stimulus to piety[2] Religious art was to serve as didactic aid for the illiterate and return from Humanist ideals to subjects supported exclusively by theology.[3] Despite the inescapable clarity of these prescriptions for church decoration, there was a generational delay in their full implementation as it was not for clergy to create art which would have the desired effect on their audience. According to Wittkower, it is not until around 1580 that Counter-Reformatory art is formally discernable from Mannerism.

Although all religious art was subject to clerical scrutiny on the basis of Tridentine doctrine, there was a bifurcation in the aesthetic and conceptual interpretation of the requirements. The Early Baroque was defined by two predominant stylistic approaches to fulfilling Tridentine requirements in the depiction of religious subjects: classicism and naturalism. Pioneered by Annibale Carracci and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio respectively, the styles effectively dominated art of the seventeenth century.

Agostino Carracci (1557-1602), his brother Annibale (1560-1609), and their cousin Ludovico (1555-1619), were raised and educated in the arts in Bologna. The three Carracci were educated by Correggio, a prolific and successful Mannerist painter. In

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[2] Rudolf Wittkower, "Rome Sixtus V to Paul V (1585-1621)," in *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, ed. Joseph Connors and Jennifer Montagu (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 1.
[3] Elizabeth G. Holt "The Council of Trent in Religious Art" in *Literary Sources of Art History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 242.

1582 the Carracci founded their own academy in Bologna. They were joined by a few friends in the early days of the Bolognese academy, some of which aided in the financing of the youthful institution. In addition to inviting lecturers and providing instruction, the Carracci followed the model of previous academies by collecting objects for study. Their early acquisitions included plaster casts of live models, casts of Michelangelo sculptures, and a whole human skeleton.[4] Although the academy was founded under humble circumstances, it quickly exhibited growth and increase in attendance of young artists.

By the early 1590's the Carracci were established as the leading artists in Emilia. The academy prided itself in the aggregation and mastery of techniques from surrounding regions. Students were encouraged to wed Correggeisque *sfumafo* with dynamic Venician *colore* and rigorous *disegno* of the Florentine Renaissance.[5] In 1595 artists such as Domenichino began to abandon their Mannerist masters to attend the youthful and innovative Carracci academy. As their popularity grew, the three founders began to develop individually. Rather than mask their stylistic differences, they amplified them.[6] As a result of their increasingly varied styles, the family became their own competition. Under these circumstances, it is unlikely that the Carracci academy could have survived much longer following the model with which it began.

Although the establishment of the academy in Bologna afforded the two brothers more opportunity than could have been expected, it was dwarfed by the prestige and

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[4] Donald Posner, "The Carracci Shop and Academy," in *Annibale Carracci* (New York: Pahidon Publishers Inc, 1971), 63.
[5] Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, 29.
[6] Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, 71

quantity of Roman commissions. Annibale and Agostino relocated to Rome to pursue the commissions of the Farnese family. Agostino eventually returned to Bologna where his style defaulted to his native roots, making Annibale the sole Carracci in Rome. Annibale's academic approach to art resulted in increasingly kind treatment by his contemporary biographers cumulating in Bellori's assertion that Annibale Carracci's abilities were akin to Raphael as he, alone, could be credited with reviving art from past the brink of death.[7] Although Annibale's classicist style was invented in Bologna, it peaked in Rome and was revered and imitated by countless Baroque artists to come.

Annibale's prolific classicism is credited for the revival and dissemination of the classicist art which would inform some of the most well-known and successful artists of the Baroque period. However, it was not the academic approach which would become emblematic of Italian Baroque painting, but the intuitive approach. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) was the polar opposite of the trained and refined Carracci in both naturalist style and turbulent character. The withdrawn and troubled artist certainly did not inspire the same kindness in Bellori although he never lacked in imitators. Born in Milan and poorly educated, Caravaggio's deep tenebrism, dynamic foreshortening, and unflinching naturalism would prove captivating to even the staunchest classicists, if only for a moment.

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[7] Giovanni Pietro Bellori, "Annibale Carracci," in *The Lives of The Modern Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, translated by Alice Sedgwick Wohl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 72.

While most canonical artists preceding Caravaggio had ample connections, he arrived on the scene virtually friendless and destitute. In his youth, he was occupied with assisting his father, a mason, and performed manual labor for other artists. Due to his well-documented quarrelsome nature, the young artist moved to Venice where he adopted the use of vibrant colors. Where others studied quoted antique sculptures, Caravaggio would model the appearance of even the most sacred of subjects after prostitutes and vagrants. Lacking the robust training his contemporaries endured, Caravaggio would often mask his naïveté with deep tenebrism and dramatic foreshortening which would become emblematic of Baroque painting. Caravaggio's unique and daring style eventually won the attention of Cardinal del Monte in Rome who gave him a place in his household.[8] The artist's unique style continued to earn him prestigious commissions.

Caravaggio's naturalism was free from academic constraints and yielded images of outstanding realism and theatrical qualities. Caravaggio's style never lacked in imitators, his withdrawn and difficult character was not suited to teaching. For this reason, many of his followers never met their master. Although the acquisition of such a style did not require conventional training, it came with risk on behalf of the commissioner. Caravaggisti naturalism was profound and innovative, but the employment of the style always teetered on degradation of lofty subject matter in its lack of academic elevation and decorum.

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[8] Bellori, "Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio", in *The Lives of The Modern Painters, Sculptors,* 180-182.

As the popularity of Caravaggio's style gained traction, Annibale's unique style flourished as well. Unfortunately, neither artist fared particularly well later in their careers. Despite inventing the two major styles which would shape Italian Baroque painting, the two artists seemed unable to enjoy success. After murdering a man after a tennis match, Caravaggio fled Rome, never to return. Around the same time, Annibale succumbed to a deep depression following the completion of the Farnese ceiling.[9] It has been suggested that this incurable melancholy was triggered by insufficient compensation for the artist's efforts of the massive undertaking.[10] The future combinations of Carracci classicism with Caravaggisti naturalism signifies the beginning of a spectrum upon which artists of the Baroque period are traditionally plotted. Each artist of the seventeenth century was faced with a conscious decision in their choosing of the esteemed Carracci path to learned art and selectively refined techniques or imitation of the enigmatic yet pedagogically depraved Caravaggio. Further decisions had to be confronted in the combining of approaches. Classicism came with a refinement which, while elevated, could prove emotionally bankrupt while naturalism came with no clear instructions and risked diminishing sacred subject matter.

Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino occupy three distinct points on the classicist-naturalist spectrum of the early seventeenth century. Caravaggio approaches his piece with his signature naturalism while Domenichino's treatment of Cecilia has been

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[9] Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, 37.
[10] Richard E. Spear (2003) Scrambling for Scudi: Notes on Painters' Earnings in Early Baroque Rome, The Art Bulletin, 85:2, 310-320

regarded as more classicizing than the Carracci before him. Guercnio's altarpiece for Saint Peter's Basilica exhibits a selective stylistic approach wherein classicist decorum is employed in the receiving of Petronilla into heaven by Christ as naturalistic qualities inform the interment scene below. Each artists' employment of classicism and naturalism is expected as it fits into their respective stylistic and biographical evolution. However, the passive treatment of the female martyr consistent between the three works is surprising in reconciliation of Tridentine demands for action and didactic narrative.

Compositionally, the three artists juxtaposed the body of the martyred saint against the ground and altar. However, each piece uniquely employs this composition in address to their respective altar. Caravaggio's altarpiece was meant to adorn a provincial martyrium in Sicily with sensitivity to a local cult, while Domenichino's extract from a fresco cycle serves a larger decorative scheme. Guercino's monumental adornment for the altar of French Kings within Saint Peter's Basilica negotiates a larger decorative scheme and the presence of relics within the altar.

Burial of Saint Lucy

Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* was completed for the apse of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro in Syracuse, Sicily. The patroness of Syracuse was born in 283 A.D. died in 308 A.D. under the Diocletian prosecutions. Her name derives from the Latin word for light and, for this reason, her eyes on a platter serve as her attribute. When Lucy was young, her mother suffered from a fatal disease. She prayed to Saint Agatha and vowed her chastity to Christ in exchange for her mother's health. Her mother was healed and, unknowing of her daughter's vow, betrothed her to a pagan nobleman. Upon her refusal

to wed, Lucy was first sentenced to defilement in a brothel. Oxen came to collect her, but her feet sunk further into the ground. She was then to be burned at the stake, but wouldn't catch fire.[11] Eventually she was stabbed in the neck and died against a column of a Greek temple where her tomb would be built.[12] Although Santa Lucia al Sepolcro derives significance from its development over the site Saint Lucy was martyred, her relics were removed long before Caravaggio's intersection with the local cult. Given the absence of Lucy's body in her tomb below, the altarpiece effectively creates the intact tomb of the martyr below the congregation under the guise of describing it.

Despite the scriptural precedence for and mastery of the depiction of violence, Caravaggio presents parishioners with a solemn funerary scene. Torture is replaced by mourning as narrative indicators such as the method of her martyrdom and attributes pertaining to the life and death of the saint are omitted entirely. In the background, a Roman archway constitutes a straight line to Lucy's neck, where the fatal wound was delivered. Personifying the architectural surroundings within the painting, this Roman motif alludes to the entity which sentenced Lucy to death without undermining Lucy's centrality with the addition of figures. Dwarfed by uninterrupted planes of earth and architecture, figures occupy only two thirds of the composition and serve as arrows towards Lucy's body, rather than vessels of emotion. The eye is guided to the body of the

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[11] Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (New York: New York Times, 1969), 34-35.
[12] Rosa Giorgi, "Lucy," in *Saints in Art* (Los Angeles: The Getty Museum, 2003), 230-232.

martyr by way of the two grave diggers whose bodies create a visual parenthetical around Saint Lucy. The left digger looks up to his commander as his shovel contradicts his trepidation by piercing the ground. Whether it be the bishop's staff, the downward slope of the crowd in conjunction with their eye line, or the falling arch in the background, the scene is fraught with nether facing arrows dragging the eye down towards the fallen body of Saint Lucy and down further still to an imagined space below; the spot Lucy was entombed and upon which the basilica was built.

The stylistic simplicity and muted palette have been previously explained by the artist's hurried stay in Syracuse and his impending death, of which he could not have expected. [13] Furthermore, the monumental altarpiece has been subjected to relocation and experimental restoration techniques which exaggerate the austerity of the work. This austerity, however, is unfairly informed by preconceived expectations of Caravaggio. The absence of theatrical treatment of religious subject matter, narrative informants, and perhaps the optimism of a young artist working in Rome are observable in the quiet funerary scene. However, upon attending to what is present and considering the piece in its intended location, *The Burial of Saint Lucy* becomes a sophisticated dialogue with the basilica for which it was created. Additionally, the similarity of the funerary composition to Domenichino and Guercino's work suggests a significance to the proximity of the female martyr to earth and altar which has not yet been explained.

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[13] Peter Robb, *M, The Man Who Became Caravaggio* (New York, NY: Picador, 1999), 442.

Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia

Domenichino's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* is a component of a larger decorative scheme descriptive of the martyr's life for the Polet Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi. The fresco cycle was commissioned by Pierre Polet, a priest of the diocese of Noyon, *deputati* of San Luigi dei Francesi, and attendant to Clement VII.[14] The commission came at a pivotal time in Domenichino's career. Although he was one of the first major artists to join the Carracci academy, he found his connections in Rome to be scarce. Ready to depart Rome, Domenichino won the commission of an altarpiece for San Girolamo della Cartià and the decoration of the Polet chapel in 1612. It has been suggested that Polet wished to commemorate his attendance at Saint Cecilia's exhumation in Trastevere in 1599, although there are no surviving documents to prove such an intention. [15] It has also been suggested that Domenichino had a personal affinity for Saint Cecilia due to his interest in music. [16] Domenichino's contract called for the chapel's decoration with five scenes of the martyr's life. Two preliminary sketches were submitted for *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* and *Distribution of Alms.* Domenichino was allowed to determine the content for the remainder of the chapel.

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[14] Pierre La Croix, *Mémoire historique sur les institutions de France à Rome: puisé dans leurs archives et autres documents la plupart inédits* (Editrice Romana, 1868)

[15] Lisa A. Festa, "Domenichino's Polet Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi," in *The Chapels of Italy, From The Twelfth To The Eighteenth Centuries: Art, Religion, Patronage, and Identity*, ed. Lilian H. Zirpolo (Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey2010), 361-385.
[16] Richard E. Spear, *Domenichino* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980)

Cecilia lived in the third century, although she was not venerated until the ninth century when her relics were moved to Rome.[17] She was betrothed to Valerian, a pagan nobleman, despite her vow of virginity. Upon respecting his wife's chastity, Valerian witnessed an angel and he was baptized along with his brother, Tibertius. The two brothers were martyred along with Cecilia who was sentenced to suffocation in a Roman bath where she was sequestered for three days. An executioner gave her three blows to the neck with a sword. Roman law prohibited a fourth blow so she bled from the neck for three days in the bath while pilgrims collected her blood. She asked that a church should be erected over her house and gave her belongings to the poor. For this reason, she is often associated with charity and alms. In art, she is seldom represented during any events of her life, but as the patron saint of music with a harp as her identifying attribute.

While *Saint Cecilia Distributing Alms* is regarded as the most dynamic composition within the Polet chapel, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* exhibits a highly tempered classicism which seems to deny the pain and suffering associated with martyrdom. The pilgrims surrounding the martyr create two rhythmic diagonals which intersect with Saint Cecilia, and more specifically, her eye line which immediately connects with the angel delivering her palm and golden crown. Pope Urban I delivers a final blessing, seemingly unaware of the angel. While this piece is not over the altar, a female figure holding the expiring saint refers to it explicitly through a pointing gesture. Saint Cecilia's expression is in denial of any bodily damage or suffering. While the

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[17] Giorgi, "Cecilia", 83.

complementary scenes are fraught with Classical quotations, *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* seems to be largely an invention of Domenichino. Of course, Cecilia had many precedents in art, yet depicting her life in entirety was an original pursuit.

Although *Cecilia Distributing Alm*s is often cited as the pinnacle of Baroque classism, little scholarly attention has been given to Domenichino's decoration of the Polet chapel in terms of thematic unity cumulating in martyrdom. Domenichino's fresco cycle for the Polet chapel remains nebulous in terms of its exact function for the French royal church in Rome. The *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* serves an important function within the context of the Polet Chapel. Although Saint Cecilia's life cumulating in martyrdom in conjunction with Tridentine requirements for art provided a precedent for the depiction of blood and violence, the scene is sterilized of any sign of visceral struggle. While one wouldn't expect the employment of excessive gore of Domenichino, the compete omission of that which defines her martyrdom is surprising.

Burial of Saint Petronilla

Guercino's depiction of Saint Petronilla for Saint Peter's Basilica is also without any signs of bodily damage. Guercino studied the artwork and structure of the Carracci academy. Like the Carracci, Guercino also had an affinity for teaching as evidenced by the high demand of instruction at his own academy. The commission of the altarpiece was a result of the Bolognese artist's early alignment with Pope Gregory XV (1554-

1623).[18] The monumental altarpiece for Saint Peter's Basilica depicts the simultaneous entombment and reception into heaven of Saint Petronilla, the daughter of Saint Peter. As per *The Golden Legend* a man saw her bathing when she was ten years old and took her for his wife. Shortly after their union, she became paralyzed on one side and was sickly. Her paralysis was credited to God as saving her purity. Peter once proved he could save her and enabled her to walk. Although Peter was praised for his miracle, he confessed he had a vision when she was born that she would cause spiritual harm in the form of lust to many if she was allowed to stay healthy. Disregarding Peter's warning, Flaccus, a pagan nobleman, tried to marry her and she starved herself to death.

Saint Petronilla and her altar and Saint Peter's Basilica have a long and political relationship with the French monarchy. In the eighth century, an altar was dedicated to the martyr as a result of an agreement between Pope Paul I and Pepin the Short, king of the Franks. The Chappelle de Rois de France containing her relics was contested during the fifteenth century when various towns in France claimed to be in possession of her relics. In 1474, a sarcophagus adorned with dolphins containing her relics was discovered in Rome. The dolphin motif in combination with the improved condition of the Dauphin's health upon the discovery of her relics resulted in the crediting of Saint Petronilla for the health and prosperity of the French monarchy. Shortly after, the new Saint Peter's Basilica was built and her remains were put in the Altar of the Holy Crucifix

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[18] Julian Brooks, "Guercino's Life," in *Guercino Mind to Paper* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006)

until 1606. Sixteen years later, Guercino was commissioned to depict the burial and reception into heaven of Saint Petronilla.[19]

The transient history of Saint Petronilla's relics is important in the analysis of Guercino's colossal altarpiece due to the hand which appears disembodied under the body of the saint. The body's contested location calls into question the subject of entombment or exhumation. Although the hand could simply be supporting the weight of the body as it is lowered into the grave, it isn't logical that a figure would be placed in the grave during in an interment. It has been argued the hand is actually exhuming the body of Petronella in acknowledgement of her removal from France and rediscovery in Rome, asserting that the rightful place of her relics is in the altar in Saint Peters. The red and gold of her dress have also been cited as evidence for the painting's purpose as an address to Louis XIII who was not cooperating exactly with the Papacy's will during the Thirty Years' War. [20]Although there is compelling evidence to support the altarpiece as a political address to the French monarchy, it seems mainly circumstantial as there is no evidence to suggest Louis XIII would have seen the piece or even have knowledge of it.[21]

In addition to temporal ambiguity, the *Burial of Saint Petronilla* also exhibits a degree of stylistic confusion. In the upper register, the reception of Saint Petronilla is decidedly classicized. The lower register, however exhibits naturalistic tendencies. The

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[19] Leo Steinberg, "Guercino's "Saint Petronilla","*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 35 207-244.
[20] Daniel M. Unger, Gue*rcino's Paintings and His Patrons' Politics in Early Modern Italy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010)
[21] There are no reproductive engravings of The Burial of Saint Petronilla which could have reached the French monarchy.

unflattering foreshortening and gritty demeanor of the figures are considerably less elevated than those above. While some scholars have argued that this is evidence of Guercino's bumpy transition from devout Carracci follower to a marked flirtation with naturalism, it could also be evidence of Guercino's mastery of the two. Given the relationship of the style to the subjects portrayed, it seems Guercino chose to employ naturalism selectively rather than merely stumbling through it on accident.

Although *Burial of Saint Lucy*, *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and *Burial of Petronilla* have been amply studied due to the fame and prolific output of their respective artists, there is little art historical research able to explain the discrepancy between the active portrayal of male saints in accordance with Tridentine requirements for art and the passive treatment of female martyrs. While the stylistic variances between these three artists could not be more profound, the juxtaposition of female martyr, earth, and altar is consistent, yet without precedence. The following chapters will offer an analysis of the three altarpieces in terms of Counter Reformatory martyr cults and relics, church spaces and ceremony and the role of women in relation to these images during the seventeenth century.

IMAGING TRANSFORMATION: MORTAL FLESH TO SAINTLY RELIC

The Burial of Saint Lucy, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and *Burial of Saint Petronilla* each depict a funerary scene devoid of any visceral evidence of martyrdom despite the Tridentine and scriptural precedent for the depiction of violence. Rather than show the saints in writhing agony or experiencing miraculous ecstasy, each martyr is positioned on the ground with no evidence of bodily damage. Saint Lucy and Saint Petronilla are lowered into their earthen graves, while Saint Cecilia appears to be in the process of dying, although no elicit suffering is detectable. Caravaggio, Domenichino and Guercino chose to render the unscathed corpse of the saint, instead of the experience of martyrdom. While the quiet tenor apparent in the depictions of the three martyrs is not explained by Tridentine guidelines for religious painting, the decidedly humane treatment of the body of each saint may be understood upon attending to enduring traditions and recent evolutions in the veneration of relics during the seventeenth century. The following chapter will intersect *The Burial of Saint Lucy*, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and *Burial of Saint Petronilla* with developments in the veneration of relics during the Counter-Reformation. By examining the unique circumstances relics offered to each artist, it will suggest that instead of a scene descriptive of the pain and agony implicit in martyrdom, each artist endeavored to depict the invisible; the transformation from mortal flesh to saintly relic.

The role of the body relic has fluctuated since the conception of Christianity. From proof of divine intercession to their necessity for the consecration of churches,

relics as a medium for miracles have echoed contemporaneous ideas surrounding both divinity and materiality. During the Counter-Reformation, relics served as physical evidence of both Early Christian history and the possibility of intercession. Although the conception of relics as a medium for communication with specific saints is distinctly Christian, the veneration of relics can be traced far beyond the conception of Christianity into ancient times.[22]

Upon issuing the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, Emperor Constantine called for the bodies of Christians persecuted during the 2nd and 3rd centuries to be exhumed and reinterred in the altars of new basilicas. Consequently, relics developed a role distinguished from Pagan practices. Relics, as representations of distinct personalities of saints were consulted for benign appeals such as the curing of ailments and safety during travel, but also more pointed motives such as the destruction of enemies. While the Virgin was conceived as nurturing and forgiving, body relics of minor saints were credited with more specific abilities often corresponding with the way in which they were martyred. Although the soul of the martyr was regarded as predestined for salvation, it was their body that served as evidence of the possibility of intercession. Incorruptible flesh developed as an important component of martyr veneration during the 4th century and blossomed throughout the middle ages.

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[22] Charles Freeman, "How the Christian Relic Emerged," in *Holy Bones, Holy Dust How Relics Shaped The History of Medieval Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 14.

Medieval compendiums such as the *The Golden Legend* accrued as a result of fervent veneration of saints and their relics and employed formulaic prose to underscore the importance of the body of a martyr. While the resistance to decay after death is cited as evidence for martyrdom upon the exhumation of sacred bones, the importance of the integral body is also important in the life of a martyr. Multiple failed attempts at execution are not intended to illustrate ineptitude of the executioner, but rather, to underscore the physical strength of the saint. In the case of female martyrs, the conception of incorruptible flesh is amplified by the emphasis placed on their virginity in life.[23] While the physiognomy of male saints is seldom of consequence in their narratives, female martyrs are often burdened with such beauty that the retention of their virginity is likened to a miracle, evidencing their predestination for canonization. Although the death of a martyr is synonymous with birth of their cult, it is their remains' resistance to decay and destruction that substantiate the initial sacrifice and facilitate the longevity of veneration.

The sacred power of relics inspired a necessity to visit them in an act of pilgrimage throughout the middle ages. Demand for relics increased as pilgrimage churches became increasingly competitive for visitors. This demand for relics resulted in the fragmentation and fabrication of relics beyond recognition.[24] In 1516, Martin Luther

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[23] Catherine Lawless, "Sexuality and Depictions of the Female Saint in Medieval Tuscany," in *Sexualities, Textualities, Art and Music in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Linda L. Carrol (London: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 75.
[24] Wilfrid Bosner, "The Cult of Relics in the Middle Ages," *Folklore* 73, no. 4 (Winter 1962): 236.

condemned pilgrimage churches in response to their apparent greed and fraud implicit in the acquisition of relics. Additionally, Luther believed the agency afforded to relics was mere superstition while the veneration of martyrs had become akin to the ancient pantheon of gods and goddesses and undermined the centrality of Christ. As the Protestant movement gained footing, relics were defiled and discarded across Europe as they were believed to be the bones of animals.[25] The rejection of relics was also the rejection of traditional Christian history. Additionally, the rejection of the possibility of intercession was of consequence to the institution of the papacy itself. In response to this rejection of material evidence of historical intercession, the Council of Trent was forced to address the veneration of relics directly. [26]

During the Counter-Reformation, Early Christian martyrs not only served as models for piety, but also as historicized examples of persecution which served to rekindle a sense of vulnerability amongst the faithful. Beginning with the model of Christ and continuing through subsequent historical persecutions of Christians, a defensive position

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[25] Paul Koudonaris, *Heavenly Bodies: Cult Treasures and Spectacular Saints from the Catacombs* (Thames and Hudson, 2013), 26.

[26] "Also, that the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ,-which bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life, and to be glorified,--are to be venerated by the faithful; through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men; so that they who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of saints; or, that these, and other sacred monuments, are uselessly honoured by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid; are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and now also condemns them." From "The Twenty-Fifth Session." In *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, J. Waterworth, 232. London: Dolman, 1848.

has been integral to Christianity since its conception. However, literal persecution evidencing one's faith became an unlikely fate after Emperor Constantine's legalization of Christianity in 313 so the historical enemy was replaced with the enemy within.[27] Although this internalized enemy was compelling, it did not make mobilizing parallels to the Protestant movement. Early Christian Martyrs were reinvigorated as soldiers who had fought and won against their Pagan enemies. For the first time in centuries, the glory and veneration associated with martyrdom was a plausible yet unlikely fate.

The rediscovery of the Roman catacombs in 1578 compounded on renewed ardor surrounding Early Christian martyrs.[28] The surge of body relics untinged by recent history effectively re-conceptualized the Eternal City from a Classical civilization to an Early Christian civilization thus asserting Rome as the inheritor of the original apostolic faith.[29] Popular interest in Early Christian martyrs in addition to the influx of whole relics during the late sixteenth century are apparent in *The Burial of Saint Lucy*, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and *Burial of Saint Petronilla* when they are considered not only as iterations of Tridentine requirements for art, but as Baroque iterations of the time-honored veneration of relics.

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[27] Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004)
[28] Brad S. Gregory, "The Passion for Passion in Post-Tridentine Catholicism," in *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 274.
[29] Paul Koudounaris, *Heavenly Bodies: Cult Treasures and Spectacular Saints from the Catacombs* (New York & London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), 33.

The Burial of Saint Lucy was completed for the apse of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro in Syracuse, Sicily. The basilica was originally constructed over the Greek temple in which Lucy was martyred during the Diocletian Prosecutions of the fourth century. Her body was removed in the eleventh century and is believed to be in Venice. *The Burial of Saint Lucy* has been regarded as an outlier in Caravaggio's career due to the compositional simplicity and muted palette of the altarpiece. This austerity has been previously explained by the artist's hurried stay in Syracuse and his impending death, of which he couldn't have known.[30] Furthermore, the monumental altarpiece has been subjected to relocation and experimental restoration techniques which augment the austerity of the work. This austerity, however, is unfairly judged by preconceived expectations of Caravaggio. The absence of theatrical treatment of religious subject matter and grisly naturalism of are observable in the quiet funerary scene. However, upon attending to what is present and considering the piece in its intended location, *The Burial of Saint Lucy* becomes a sophisticated dialogue with the basilica for which it was created. The employment of contiguous planes likened to the body of the martyr in combination with the depiction of the intact tomb of Saint Lucy below the basilica provide Santa Lucia al Sepolcro with a virtual substitution of the body relic of Saint Lucy.

Caravaggio employed architectural specificity to invoke a sense of reality. While the relics of Saint Lucy were absent upon the completion of the altarpiece, the architecture suggests authenticity in her body's presence within the catacomb. Along with suggesting

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[30] Peter Robb, *M, The Man Who Became Caravaggio* (New York, NY: Picador, 1999), 442.

spatial actuality, the architecture is also afforded agency in the narrative of Saint Lucy. Perspective devices, including the arch, converge on Saint Lucy's neck, where the fatal wound was delivered. While Caravaggio was known to have been interested in the Greek archaeological ruins of Syracuse, this decidedly Roman motif alludes to the entity which sentenced Lucy to death without undermining Lucy's centrality with the addition of figures.[31]

Caravaggio's exaggerated gesture is also forgone. Dwarfed by monumental planes of earth and architecture, figures mourn in contemplative stillness occupying only two thirds of the composition. They serve as arrows towards Lucy's body, rather than vessels of emotion or narrative. Saint Lucy is framed by two grave diggers on the side whose bodies create a visual parenthetical around her. The right digger's leg is treated with columnar proportions which seemingly allude to the contact relic in the apse of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.[32] The deacon's stole serves as the only burst of color in the painting and aligns with Lucy's chest as a naturalistic interpretation of a flaming heart, an attribute of Saint Lucy.

Whether it be the bishop's staff, the downward slope of the crowd in conjunction with their eye line, or the falling arch in the background, the scene is fraught with nether facing arrows dragging the eye down towards the fallen body of Saint Lucy and down

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[31] John T. Spike, *Caravaggio* (New York & London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2001), 218.

[32] The exact location of the column fragment during the seventeenth century is unknown.

further still to an imagined space below: the spot Lucy was entombed and upon which the basilica was built. The painting is composed to allude space outside of the painting itself.

In addition to depicting the undisturbed tomb of Saint Lucy, the canvas itself may be likened to a body relic. *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600) (figure 4) located in the Contarelli Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome is a preamble to *The Burial of Saint Lucy* in terms of the treatment of representation as body. Caravaggio's rendering of Saint Mathew's martyrdom, speaks to contemporary iconoclasm and the destruction of relics.[33] During the Renaissance, Saints were conventionally afforded total compositional centrality. Caravaggio animates this convention in a state of layered destruction in his rendering of Saint Matthew. Rather than centrally position the martyr, the soldier takes precedence as the central figure. In placing the destroyer of Mathew's body in the traditional location of the Saint, Caravaggio destroys the composition in a layered address to the destruction of relics. The representation, then, may be likened to the body of Saint Matthew which simultaneously destroyed.

While *The Martyrdom of Saint Mathew* employs the integral conception of the martyred body in an address to the destruction of relics, *The Burial of Saint Lucy* navigates their absence. Caravaggio's adhesion to a unified and balanced composition demonstrates his understanding of a unified body in the veneration of martyrs. The profoundly still composition speaks to the permanence of site rather than chaotic turmoil. The narrative of Saint Lucy provided ample opportunity for Caravaggio to depict a

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[33] Todd P. Olsen, "Martyrdom," in *Caravaggio's Pitiful Relics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 69.

tortured or noncontiguous body. By rendering continuous planes and compositional unity the canvas itself becomes an intrinsic whole likened to the conceptual body of Saint Lucy. The representation serves a substitution for her physical body which restores the narrative continuity of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro as the death site of Saint Lucy.

While the *Burial of Saint Lucy* substitutes as a body relic, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* depicts the transformation from mortal flesh to venerable relic. Domenichino rendered Saint Cecilia in the days after her attempted execution. *The Golden Legend* describes the failed decapitation of Cecilia and the subsequent collection of her blood by pilgrims for three days.[34] Considering the interest placed on the blood of Saint Cecilia in along with Tridentine requirements for art, the minimization of blood indicates Domenichino did not endeavor to depict the death of Cecilia. Rather, the composition speaks to renewed interest in the integral body of martyrs and responds to the recent exhumation of Saint Cecilia in Trastevere by depicting the martyr's transformation to relic.

Saint Cecilia was exhumed under her titular church in Trastevere in 1599. Pierre Polet was in attendance of the exhumation, which was likely amongst the highest accolades of his career. Bloody clothes were distributed to the most esteemed attendees. However, it is unlikely that Polet was of sufficient ranking to receive a relic.[35] Upon her

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[34] Jacob De Voragine, "Saint Cecilia," in *The Golden Legend*, translated by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941), 695.
[35] Lisa A. Festa, "Domenichino's Polet Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi," in *The Chapels of Italy, From The Twelfth To The Eighteenth Centuries: Art, Religion, Patronage, and Identity*, ed. Zirpolo H. Lilian (New Jersey: Woodcliff Lake, 2010)

exhumation, it was said that the flesh of Saint Cecilia was uncorrupted by time or decay. Domenichino's minimization of blood locates the scene after death yet before her assumption. Temporal location in combination with the unscathed depiction of Cecilia suggest the martyr's body has been restored, foreshadowing the incorruptibility of her body that Pierre Polet witnessed in 1599.

Spatial ambiguity also suggests the depiction of transformation rather than a conventional depiction of martyrdom. Cecilia was martyred in a Roman bath but previously requested a church be erected over her home as an act of charity. Domenichino did not commit to a domestic or ancient setting. Instead, the space is ambiguous if not incoherent. The lack of an identifiable light source suggests the scene is unfolding underground where her relics would later be exhumed. The varied gestures of figures suggest the witnessing of transformation as well. A woman holds Cecilia as she ostensibly points towards Pope Urban I. Although the gesture seems to be in recognition of the Pope, the gesture continues towards the altar within the Polet Chapel. This connection between martyred body and altar offers the most direct reference to Cecilia's transformation from saint to relic as body relics were conventionally placed in altars since the 4th century.

Just as *The Burial of Saint Lucy* and the *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* omit physical damage to the martyred body in address to incorruptible flesh as evidence of martyrdom, *The Burial of Saint Petronilla* draws upon the integral body to establish a familial dialogue between relics. Guercino presented the interment and reception into heaven of Saint Petronilla in two distinct registers. While the upper register is fairly conventional,

the lower register exhibits considerable spatial and temporal ambiguity. The landscape constitutive of the lower register seemingly alludes to the Rotunda of the Mausoleum of Petronilla attached to Constantine's Basilica with the inclusion of a broken column resembling the 5th century dome.

The narrative depicted is uncertain due to the hand underneath the body of Saint Petronilla which raises ambiguity of subject matter. Although it has been suggested that the hand is meant to underscore a pointed statement to Louis XIII asserting the presence of Saint Petronilla's relics in Rome as an appeal to the French monarchy to act in accordance with the Vatican during the Thirty Years' War, there is no evidence that Louis XIII would have knowledge of the piece.[36] However, the temporal ambiguity implicated by the inclusion of the hand is noteworthy. There is no precedence for a hand placed beneath the body of the martyr and it doesn't make logistical or conceptual sense to place a figure beneath the saint during interment. For this reason, it is possible Guercino alluded to the exhumation of Petronilla as her relics were moved numerous times and were thought to be in France before their discovery in Rome which may be indicated by the presence of the hand.[37]

While the expression of political commentary is a possible explanation for the disembodied hand, it is almost impossible to substantiate as it is unlikely the alleged audience for such commentary would be aware of such a subtle address. Given the

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[36] Daniel M Unger, *Guercino's Paintings and His Patrons' Politics in Early Modern Italy.* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).
[37] Leo Steinberg "Guercino's Saint Petronilla." *Memoirs of The American Academy in Rome* 35 (1980).

relationship between Saint Peter and Saint Petronilla, the disembodied hand seems to be representative of Saint Peter, whose tomb defines the purpose of the Basilica. Not having representational precedent or identifying attributes, Guercino had to invent the image of Petronilla. Rather than expound upon the beauty of the martyr, Guercino rendered a foreshortened corpse, whose face is barely visible. Considering her lack of attributes, it would seem fitting to utilize her relation to her father in her identification. This interpretation of the disembodied hand suggests that Saint Peter appears twice in the painting, mirroring the dualistic depiction of Saint Petronilla. Just as Petronilla is simultaneously received into heaven by Christ and interred, Saint Peter simultaneously presides over Petronilla's burial and receives his daughter into his martyrium in acknowledgement of their transformation into saintly relics.

Although Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino were faced with vastly different circumstances in the portrayal of virgin martyrs, *The Burial of Saint Lucy*, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* and *The Burial of Saint Petronilla* exhibit similar sensitivities to the importance of the integral body of a martyr and its transformation to holy relic after death. Upon intersecting contemporaneous developments in the veneration of martyrs with the completion of the three works, the composition consisting of the body of the virgin martyr juxtaposed with earth and altar becomes an iteration of the distinct function relics served during the seventeenth century. As historical examples of venerable sacrifice and material evidence of intercession, relics served to reinforce the Catholic faith as the inheritors of miraculous history. As their remains were exhumed and purportedly uncorrupted, artists were charged with not only the portrayal of their

sacrifice, but the transformation that facilitated their relevance into the seventeenth century.

CLERICAL PRESENSE IN LAY DEVOTION

Although the extensive veneration of relics and adhesion to time-honored tradition in the celebration of martyrs would seemingly demonstrate the potency of the Catholic faith during the seventeenth century, the continuation of local traditions were often at odds with the Counter-Reformatory vision for a unified and homogenous church. In response to popular modes of devotion which developed outside of formal religion, local clergy were charged with asserting the Catholic institution as the official and authoritative interpretation of the faith. However, lay spirituality was not to be suppressed as it was at the core of faith and tradition for centuries. Clergy were tasked with enforcing Tridentine policies without trampling on popular faith and tradition. This precarious situation begot an equally delicate relationship between artist and patron in the creation of religious art. While lay traditions must be honored by religious art in order to appeal to the masses, so must the supremacy of the Catholic church along with its clerical patrons of art. By incorporating local martyrs in the visual repertoire of the church, Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino effectively negotiate the relationship of clerical authority to popular devotion. By examining the imaging of laity in relation to clergy apparent in *The Martyrdom of Saint Lucy*, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and *Burial of Saint Petronilla* the following chapter will suggest that each artist sought to render a model for the ideal Counter-Reformatory parish as traditionally faithful, yet dutiful to the church and its clergy.

After the publication of the *Missale Romanum* in 1570 during the pontificate of Pius V, many local rites and ceremonies were replaced with common prayers in an effort to homogenize the spirituality of the faithful in response to regional variations of worship. This pointed address to the diverse nature of Catholic ceremony illustrates an apparent schism which colors many Counter-Reformatory developments. While the Council of Trent provided clear instruction for the execution of formal religion, the decisions of high ranking clergy had little or delayed effect on extra-liturgical practices. Although local clergy were effective in disseminating official rhetoric and ritual, the tradition of the laity was often ungovernable just outside the church.

During the seventeenth century, the discrepancy between formal and lay devotional practices was especially apparent in the veneration of martyrs. As the church endeavored on an introspective evolution in order to create a unified and homogenous Catholic faith, the official endorsement of martyr cults was a convenient vehicle to imbue a sense of locality and specificity to Catholicism. Additionally, Early Christian martyrs made poignant parallels to persecuted Catholics throughout Northern Europe and England. Although the mythos surrounding martyrs themselves were in accordance with the political motives of the larger Catholic church, they were steeped in tradition which was not.

Martyr feasts developed long before the legalization of Christianity. For this reason, the ceremonial veneration of martyrs developed without sanctioned procedure. Although lay participation in processional devotions might seem evidential of fervent religious belief and affinity for church, the opposite was often true during the Counter-

Reformation. Laity often preferred their processions, festivals, and casual celebrations to attendance of Mass, confession or communion within the church.[38] While the entrance of a church meant the subjugation of oneself to regimented choreography and rhetoric, popular devotions were social affairs in which the presence of authority was replaced with drinking, dancing, and the enjoyment of music.

The transformation of popular tradition into formal ritual was an important component of asserting the necessity and authority of clergy, and by consequence the institution of the papacy. *The Martyrdom of Saint Lucy*, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia*, and *Burial of Saint Petronilla* effectively depict the legitimization of popular devotion by rendering clerical presence presiding over both the martyred body and the practice of veneration. In the juxtaposition of body and earth in proximity to the altar, each artist seems to suggest the act of martyrdom alone is not venerable, but requires the church's ritual apparatus. By creating a relationship between the martyred body in the painting, the clergy in the sacred chapel, and the public as viewers of both, each artist invokes not only the original act of martyrdom, but also requisite official acknowledgement as constitutive of the venerability of the female saint.

Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* was created for the apse of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, a basilica and pilgrimage church commemorating the death site of Saint Lucy. Although pilgrimages were encouraged by the Catholic church, pilgrimage churches

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[38] Nigel Yates, "Counter Reformation Catholicism," in *Liturgical Space* (London: Routledge, 2008), 99.

often operated side by side with local secular traditions. Although clerical powers could not forbid popular manifestations happening outside pilgrimage churches, they made a pointed effort to distinguish sanctioned devotion from secular activities.[39]

Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* not only forgoes any evidence of the suffering associated with martyrdom, but also any suffering on the part of the surrounding figures. Where one might expect the drama of martyrdom to be displaced upon subsidiary figures, there is none to be found. Quiet contemplation may be read as a naturalistic rendering of funerary grief. However, in light of the institutional disdain for the raucous behavior associated with the veneration of martyrs, the uncharacteristic omission of exaggerated gesture on the part of Caravaggio reads as a calibrated coalescence of rustic tradition with poised participation in formal congregation. The witnesses to Saint Lucy's martyrdom and subsequent burial effectively constitute the first iteration of a funerary procession in the saint's honor. Seeing as the solemnity of the imaged congregation is incongruous with what may be understood about contemporary popular martyr veneration, the historic solemnity and gestural quietness seems aimed at inspiring a contemporary parallel in the behavior of pilgrims and parishioners visiting the martyrium of Saint Lucy during the seventeenth century.

In addition to providing a reminder for proper regard for the martyred saint, *The Burial of Saint Lucy* speaks to funerary developments during the Counter-Reformation because a bishop is noticeably present in relation to a devoted congregation. In response

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[39] Yates, " Counter Reformation Catholicism," 101.

to the Protestant rejection of purgatorial rites, wherein funerals wore on for days in hopes of freeing the departed from the shackles of limbo, the Catholic church elaborated on their importance. Protestant funerals quickly developed into the simple interment of a body as it was believed judgement had taken place upon the moment of death, while Catholic funerals retained a belief in the lengthy funeral services since purgatory as a midpoint between life and judgement endured.[40] Purgatorial rites represented a final opportunity for the living to have impact over the outcome of the deceased's soul. Intense prayer on the part of the living was believed to increase the likelihood of saintly intercession and a favorable judgment. Due to this belief, participation in funerary rites continued as a communal obligation. Of course, the efficacy of prayer was dependent on the adherence to formalized ritual. During the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent in 1563, the upholding of purgatorial doctrine was established as the expressed responsibility of local bishops.[41]

Caravaggio effectively acknowledged the importance of local clergy in relation to funerary ritual by allowing the deacon to share compositional centrality with the body of Saint Lucy. The dual centrality of the deacon and Saint Lucy affords authority, not solely to the body relic of Saint Lucy, but to local clergy. This delicate placement of the deacon in between the mourners and the martyred body also speaks an insistence on clerical

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[40] Bassett, Steven. *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to The Dead and The Dying 100-1600*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, 173.
[41] H.J. Schroeder, "Twenty-Fifth Session," in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishing Inc., 1941)

sanctioning in regard to ritual veneration of martyrs. By affording local clerical authority with compositional centrality traditionally reserved for the saint, Caravaggio assimilates local clergy with the spirituality of the laity in the enduring veneration of Saint Lucy.

Although it is Saint Lucy's site of death which originally imbued Santa Lucia al Sepolcro with sanctity, the dual centrality of Saint Lucy and the local deacon suggests it is not only the body of the martyr, but also the acknowledgement of the local clergy which provides the basilica and the local cult with validity. Caravaggio expounds upon clerical hierarchy with the placement of the bishop, who is only identifiable by his vestments as his mitre dwarfs the congregation. The restrained nature of the mourners in combination with the deacon's shared centrality with the saint and the pervasive presence of the bishop effectively validates clerical authority in popular devotion both in life and after death.

While Caravaggio expounded upon the authority of the clergy in his placement of figures and omission of profound gesture, Domenichino utilized exaggerated gesture to image an exuberant congregation as well as assimilate clerical authority with the veneration of relics, which can be seen in the presence of local families along with Pope Urban I. Domenichino's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* employs lively gesture in order to attract and engage parishioners for veneration and worship.

Although studies pertaining to the Catholic agenda during the Counter-Reformation are often focused on the inherent opposition to the Protestant movement, the Catholic church was also challenged by a vestigial problem within. Disinterest and lack of participation on behalf of the faithful are surely as old as religion itself. Catholics

during the Counter-Reformation provide no exception to the scarcely documented yet undeniably pervasive tendency for individuals to become disinvested in religious ceremony. Although non-participatory and disruptive behavior scarcely inspired documentation, some accounts survive. In 1706 the Bishop of Toul complained of the barking and pollution due to too many dogs in attendance of Mass while other churches dealt with children amusing themselves by sneaking into galleries to spit on the heads of unsuspecting parishioners below. While the unruly behavior of children and animals in church is relatively unsurprising, another local parish church battled not only with disruption, but with blatant avoidance. One instance recounts parishioners walking to a faraway abbey due to its reputation for shorter masses rather than attending their local parish church.[42] Although these provincial accounts are rare and specific, it may be assumed that similar problems were experienced by clergy irrespective of regional location.

In light of ubiquitous problems associated with disinterest in formalized religious ritual, Domenichino employs exaggerated gesture in order to image enthusiasm. The artist afforded the most animation to the child in the foreground who flings his arms upwards while his mother contemplates the body of Cecilia. By directing the child's attention upward to the angel delivering the martyr's palm, Domenichino offers a palatable vignette of the overall narrative to the child. By depicting the child in a partial state of undress, Domenichino also acknowledges the disheveled and often unpredictable

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[42] Yates, "Counter Reformation Catholicism," 99.

nature of children. This disheveled state is immediately forgiven not only by the child's rapturous reaction to the palatable portion of the narrative, but by his mother's insistence on her child's participation in the scene. While the child's hands reach upwards as if to desperately make contact with the angel, his mother's hands instinctively grab at his body imbuing a sense of supervision and control. The inclusion of such lively content not only strengthens the pictorial narrative, but also prescribes the ideal behavior for local parishioners.

Given the proximity of The *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* to *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* in the Contarelli Chapel, it is reasonable to assume Domenichino would view and innovate the visual relationship between children and martyrdom.[43] As Matthew's torturer prepares for a blow to the fallen Saint Matthew, a child runs away with his mouth agape presumably screaming at the horror at his feet. While the understandably terrified child fleeing from the atrocities of martyrdom certainly speaks to Tridentine requirements pertaining to the realistic depiction of religious subject matter, it certainly doesn't merit behavioral imitation on behalf of children in church. Rather than afford a child with autonomy and a naturalistic reaction to martyrdom, Domenichino instead set forth an example of maternal supervision in conjunction with a realistically disheveled yet spiritually inspired child.

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[43] William E. Wallace, "Caravaggio Is Not Great or How Domenichino Made Improvements," *Notes in the History of Art* 30, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 36.

In addition to visualizing ideal yet attainable participation on behalf of children, Domenichino further employs gesture to naturalize the presence of clergy in the veneration of martyrs. As previously suggested, the *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* speaks to the transformation from mortal flesh to saintly relics. Although this process is achieved by martyrdom itself, the presence of Pope Urban I effectively asserts that communal witness to martyrdom alone, is not sufficient in the canonization and eventual venerability of the saint. Rather, the bi-fold process of martyrdom followed by clerical acknowledgment effectively completes the transformation from mortal flesh to saintly relic providing material substance in service to venerability. Seeing as the chapel was commissioned by a member of the clergy, it seems fitting that Domenichino would emphasize the authority of the papacy in the canonization of saints, rather than present their venerability as a popular local cult.

The Burial of Saint Lucy and the *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* invoke the presence of the local bishop and pope respectively in order to suggest a historical correlation between relic and formal religion. While Caravaggio and Domenichino effectively naturalized the presence of clerical authority in the veneration of martyrs, Guercino expounded on the primacy of the pope by indicating the presence of Saint Peter in the grave receiving the body of Saint Petronilla in the lower third of the canvas.

As previously suggested the presence of the relics of Saint Peter under the Basilica is alluded to by the placement of a disembodied hand delicately receiving Saint Petronilla into the grave in the bottom of the canvas. By alluding to Saint Peter's physical presence underneath the body of Saint Petronilla with the inclusion of a

disembodied hand, a temporal relationship between father and daughter is formed. Although Saint Petronilla's martyrdom and subsequent burial occurred before that of her father, the placement of Saint Peter's hand speaks to Saint Peter's role as both Saint Petronilla's father and the first Pope in Rome whose station would grant him the ability to canonize his daughter. By clutching the body of his daughter, Saint Peter provides her body with the acknowledgement necessary for the veneration of her relics and of her soul.

Just as medieval compendiums such as *The Golden Legend* present formulaic narratives to illustrate the process of martyrdom, Renaissance and Baroque accounts of incorruptible flesh upon exhumation of martyrs evidence their transformation to saintly relic. Although this relationship between legendary and verifiable happenings serves to assimilate the Counter-Reformation Catholicism with its Early Christian predecessor, the veneration martyrs developed as remarkably independent of clerical involvement. The juxtaposition of clergy and martyred body serves to usurp Early Christian martyrs as sovereign intercessors. By presenting clerical acknowledgement as of equal importance to the act of martyrdom, Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino effectively redistribute the power inherent in the transformative process of martyrdom in equal parts to the venerable relic of the saint and the clergy who facilitates their formalized veneration. The presence of clergy in each piece insists upon the authority of the church by suggesting that the process of martyrdom is not for the laity to identify and commemorate, but for clergy to validate and ritualize. This assimilation of clergy into the

veneration of martyrs effectively asserts clerical supervision as the ultimate requisite to valid spirituality thus asserting the supremacy of official religion over lay tradition.

DECONTRUCTING THE FEMALE BODY IN SACRED SPACES

Upon intersecting the tradition of martyr veneration as it pertains to saintly relics with Counter-Reformatory efforts to coalesce clerical authority with popular faith, *The Burial of Saint Lucy, The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia,* and *The Burial of Saint Petronill*a may be understood as efforts to necessitate clerical authority in all aspects of devotion. This relatively broad understanding of the representation of the three virgin martyrs does little to explain the passive treatment of female saints as opposed to their active male counterparts in the juxtaposition of martyred body, earth, and altar. In order to understand the precedent for such a consistent composition, women's relationship to both venerable relics and experiences within Catholic ritual and ceremony must be consulted. By examining the unique experiences of female parishioners within sacred spaces during the seventeenth century, the following chapter will suggest Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino invoked gendered separation, and the transformative process of martyrdom in their paintings, in order to image Saint Lucy, Saint Cecilia, and Saint Petronilla in order to unburden each saint from their female body in service of prudent veneration.

Observable societal and visual iterations of Original sin transposed onto living women is a pervasive trope which runs simultaneously through Christianity and the history of art. While liturgical calendars are based on the body of Christ, women were not allowed to enter sacred spaces while menstruating, pregnant, or recovering from childbirth. Such policies find precedence in Leviticus 15 as women were forbidden to enter temples while menstruating. Further interpretations suggested menstruation as

punishment for Original sin.[44] Varying degrees of intolerance towards women's bodies in sacred spaces are traceable throughout history, from the aforementioned forbiddance of menstruating and pregnant women in sacred spaces to Pope Gregory the Great's 606 proclamation that although menstruation was consequential of the Fall, it was not inherently sinful.[45] In order to identify the problematization of women's bodies and the souls which inhabit them with any specificity during the early seventeenth century, overarching tropes such as original sin and its liturgical iterations in must be tempered with studies in social history which offer more concrete testaments to performed gender relations, even within sacred spaces.

For women of the seventeenth century, attendance at Mass and religious ceremony was expected in daily life. Their integration with men seemed to constitute a locus of unrest and formal regulation on behalf of the Catholic institution. The mingling of women and men in church spaces was regarded as inherently problematic throughout the Counter-Reformation. For this reason, the institutional apparatus of the Catholic church separated of women from men via temporary partitions during Mass and the institutional segregation of genders in the form of asylums and convents.

The official content of Mass and receiving communion is fairly straight forward and available by official publications of missiles and consultation of liturgical calendars.

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[44] Adrian Rudolph, "Regarding Women in Sacred Spaces," in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 18.
[45] Maria Warner, "Virgins and Martyrs," in *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 76.

However, such materials only present the intent of clerical powers for church activities and offer little information in terms of social interactions within sacred spaced during the Counter-Reformation. In other words, such clerical documents do not offer a rounded understanding of the behavior of the laity. Although accounts of the necessity of gendered separation in sacred spaces are largely comprised of provincial accounts and scant material evidence, it is reasonable to assume the catalysts which begot such policies intended to minimize interaction between genders, were not a result of regional behavior, but human nature.

During the construction Saint Peter's Basilica, Michelangelo expressed concerns pertaining to the opportunities lack of light and deep recesses provide to the accosting of nuns.[46] While Michelangelo's remark speaks to monumental architecture and the necessity for thwarting sexual behavior in sacred spaces, humbler examples of unrest as a result of the sexuality implicit in the mixing of genders in sacred space can also be found in paintings and broadsheets disseminated throughout the fifteenth century. Such paintings as *San Bernadino Preaching in the Piazza del Campo* (c. 1448) (figure 5) illustrate the utilization of a temporary cloth partition between genders during a public sermon. Earlier evidence of such segregation by partition is imaged in Giotto di Bondone's *The Miracle of the Crib at Greccio* (c. 1290-1300) (figure 6) while Fra Angelico's *St. Peter Preaching to the Romans* (1433) (figure 7) images the separation of

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[46] Adrian Rudolph, "Regarding Women in Sacred Spaces," in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 38.

genders without structural implement. While these imaged examples of the literal separation of gender are earlier than the pieces discussed here, they illustrate a desire on behalf of the Church to control the visibility of the opposite gender which may be assumed to have persevered into the Counter-Reformation. This is not to suggest that Michelangelo's address to fornication within Saint Peter's Basilica summarized gender relations within scared spaces or persevered with any certainty but, rather, that there was a fear sexuality regarding the intermingling of genders within sacred spaces which proved detrimental to the expressed purpose of ritual as decided upon by the Catholic institution.

The attendance of mass constituted a rare yet sanctioned opportunity for women to appear outside of the domestic sphere in the company of men.[47] As a place to don one's finest attire, the local parish afforded an occasion for people of both genders to see and be seen in public. Such opportunities to comingle socially threatened to take precedence over devoted participation in ritual in sacred spaces.

The temporary separation of genders during mass was exaggerated in the larger religious institutional apparatus of the seventeenth century. During the Counter-Reformation, women were expected to willingly submit themselves to the institution of marriage or if a partner was not available, a convent. Convents during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, took on a multitude of functions which expanded beyond the traditional function of custodianship of unmarried women in the form of facilitating chaste devotion. While these vestigial organizations continued to exist, institutional

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[47] Rudolph, "Regarding Women in Sacred Spaces," 17.

asylums of varying degrees of religiosity emerged as an alternative to an impoverished and permanent monastic lifestyle for women. These asylums allowed for the return to private property, engagement in elicit sexuality, and the decision to come and go as one pleased. Some institutions even accepted women unhappy in their marriage and helped others to find suitable husbands. These permeable institutions afforded women increased mobility within society.[48] The varied functions of gendered institutions seem to indicate a marked decrease in the interest of what exactly women were doing, so as long as their activities somehow bore semblance to the submission to the larger religious apparatus and were separated from the activities of men.

The theological problematization of women in combination with institutional insistence on their separation from men within church spaces, renders the veneration of women impossible within sacred spaces as such veneration requires vision on the part of both genders. The narratives of female martyrs offered a theological solution for the impossibility for living women to be venerated. While women in their living state were not to be admired in church spaces, female martyrs forwent that which made them women in order to achieve venerability; flesh. By maintaining one's virginity and disassociating from their feminine attributes in the utter destruction of their bodies, women were able to achieve transcendence and wield their virginity in a way that

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[48] Sherrill Cohen, "Asylums for Women in Counter-Reformation Italy," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe*, ed. Sherrin Marshal (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989).

afforded them a heightened status in Christian society.[49] By imaging the virgin martyr in a way that emphasized not martyrdom, but the transformation from mortal womanly flesh to venerable relic, Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino imaged the extenuating circumstances under which veneration of women was possible.

Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* depicts the interment of the patron saint of Syracuse, Sicily, in the Roman catacomb underneath her titular basilica. The temporal location of the scene in combination with clerical acknowledgement invokes the culmination of the transformative process of martyrdom. Saint Lucy's body bears no signs of the damage implicit in her martyrdom, but rather the miraculous restoration of her flesh upon her interment which evidences her saintly status to the local mourners. Although it is her body which merits veneration and evidences miraculous and incorruptible flesh, the congregation maintains a respectful distance. This lack of contact with her body serves to emphasize the saint's virginity. While, in reality the voyeuristic gaze of the laity and clergy directed towards the body of the young martyr would be inappropriate as women's bodies in sacred spaces were regarded as synonymous with moral corruption and dubious distraction, the transformative process of martyrdom effectively relieved Saint Lucy of the guilt implicit in inhabiting womanly flesh, thus allowing the imaged figures and worshipper-viewer to venerate her soul without the taint of bodily corruption.

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[49] Maria Warner, "Virgins and Martyrs," in *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 167.

Just as Caravaggio relieves Saint Lucy of feminine flesh and instead presents the represented mourners and audience with relics worthy of veneration, so too does Domenichino in *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* for the Polet Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi. The temporal location after martyrdom and restoration of incorruptible flesh and before ascension in combination with the presence of Pope Urban I indicates the status of Saint Cecilia's body not as martyred virgin, but restored saintly relic worthy of veneration. This transformed state of Cecilia's body permits the congregation to contemplate the body of a young woman in a sacred chapel in mixed company.

While Caravaggio's male and female figures are placed at a respectful distance from Saint Lucy in order to underscore her purity, Domenichino allows women closer proximity to the martyr than men. The encompassing of Saint Cecilia by women seemingly speaks to the separation of genders in sacred space as their placement pushes on looking men to the edges of the composition. A female figure holds Saint Cecilia as she points firstly towards Pope Urban I and ultimately to the altar within the Polet chapel. This gesture seems to reference female kinship in their relationship to formalized ritual. By pointing simultaneously to Urban I and the altar while holding the body of Saint Cecilia, the gesture not only indicates the relationship of saintly relics to consecrated altars, but simultaneously reinforces the importance of gendered separation within church spaces.

While Caravaggio omitted contact with the martyred body to expound upon Saint Lucy's purity, Domenichino employed the touch of a fellow woman to speak to female kinship and gendered separation within holy chapels. Guercino, too, employed touch

selectively in order to affirm the transformed state of Saint Petronilla into venerable relics and emphasize the relatively unknown saint's relationship to Saint Peter. Two men lower the body of the Saint into her imaged grave with a linen sling, preventing them from coming into direct contact with the body of the expired saint. This illusionistic effect also speaks to the presence of Saint Petronilla's relics within the altar in the Chapel of French Kings. While the anonymous figures do not touch the body of Saint Petronilla, a masculine hand firmly clutches the shoulder of the martyr, lowering her into the tomb. The placement of the hand in conjunction with its privileged position on the shoulder of Saint Petronilla gives further evidence that it hand is that of Saint Peter accepting the relics of his daughter into his martyrium.

The narratives of female martyrs offered a theological solution for the impossibility for living women to be venerated. Female martyrs must forgo that which makes them women in order to achieve venerability: flesh. By imaging the virgin martyr in a way that emphasized not martyrdom, but the transformation from mortal womanly flesh to venerable relic, Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino rendered the extenuating circumstances under which living women were able to achieve recognition by both their community and by clerical authority.

During the seventeenth century, gazing upon the bodies of women was thought to make implicit moral corruption within sacred spaces while the gazing upon relics aided in contemplative meditation which elevated the soul. The separation of genders amongst the imaged figures in the three pieces speaks to prudent segregation between genders within sacred spaces. The allusion to the body of each martyr as venerable relic rather than

mortal woman allows for the veneration of female saints. By relieving each martyr of their womanly flesh and instead offering a body relic, Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino facilitated veneration of female saints within the constraints of acceptable gender interactions within Counter-Reformatory church spaces.

Unfortunately, women's perceptions of art in religious spaces is limited to rare instances of female patronage of the arts which tend to illuminate highly privileged and anomalous circumstances of women which are not of immediate value in understanding *The Burial of Saint Lucy, The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia and The Burial of Saint Petronilla*. While, it may be assumed that appealing to women was implicit in the enticing of the faithful, this analysis could benefit from exposure to archival evidence of gendered interactions during Mass during and during popular celebrations of martyrs during the seventeenth century, specifically in Rome. While there are numerous sources examining performed Gender relations in Northern Europe, it would seem that in much of seventeenth century scholarship Rome is regarded as a stable control as the scope of religious development in the Eternal City pales in comparison to those regions experiencing a profound schism between Protestants and Catholics. In order to understand the Baroque relationship of women's bodies to martyr cults and relics, further research must be undertaken in regard to contemporary attitudes towards the bodies of women.

CONCLUSION

Upon examining the Counter-Reformatory interest in Early Christian Martyrs and their specific interest in relics in conjunction with institutional efforts on the part of the Catholic church to naturalize clerical authority within popular devotions, *The Burial of Saint Lucy, The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia,* and *The Burial of Saint Petronilla* become an address not only to martyrdom as a Counter-Reformatory model for piety, but to the transformative process of martyrdom which begets the veneration of holy relics into the seventeenth century. In the case of female martyrs, their imaging as transformed flesh is necessary in facilitating their veneration as their original state was both theologically and socially problematized within sacred spaces. This is to say that Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino sought to relieve each virgin martyr of their body in order to facilitate the contemplation of their souls in their juxtapositions of body, earth, and altar.

Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* provides Santa Lucia al Sepolcro with a virtual substitution for the martyred body by employing contiguous planes likened to the integral body of the martyr as well as imaging the intact tomb of Saint Lucy below the congregation despite the absence of Saint Lucy's relics. This indication of the presence of relics restores the historical continuity of the Basilica as the site of Saint Lucy's martyrdom. By affording the local deacon shared centrality with the imaged saint, Caravaggio necessitates clerical acknowledgement of martyrdom as the locus of her canonization, rather than martyrdom alone. The temporal location of the scene also insists upon Saint Lucy's status as venerable relic as her body has been restored to an ideal state and bears no physical signs of martyrdom. While the imaging of Saint Lucy's relics

serves to reinforce the historical identity of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, it also allows for the veneration of a female saint without risking prurience on behalf of the congregation. While the sight of women, especially beautiful young women in church was seen as morally corrupting and distracting from the purpose of Mass, the presence and viewership of relics was thought to increase the efficacy of prayer and insight miraculous occurrences. By relieving Saint Lucy of a notoriously beautiful female body, Caravaggio afforded the martyr appropriate respect in his representation of her incorruptible relics evidencing her incorruptible soul.

While Caravaggio's representation of Saint Lucy speaks to lost relics, Domenichino's decoration of the Polet chapel speaks to those found of Saint Cecilia under her titular church in Trestevere in 1599. While Saint Cecilia has no discernable connection to San Luigi dei Francesi, Polet himself was in attendance of her exhumation. This event not only marked the resurgence of enthusiasm pertaining to Saint Cecilia, but was likely the pinnacle of Polet's clerical career. The spatial ambiguity with which Domenichino renders Cecilia's death speaks to the mysterious space from which Cecilia was exhumed. The temporal positioning is also similar to that of Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* in that martyrdom has already been inflicted upon the saint as evidenced by the presence of pilgrims and Pope Urban I. The lack of any damage to her body speaks to miraculous repair while the presence of Pope Urban I effectively asserts the veneration of Saint Cecilia as a formalized religious practice rather than popular devotion. By presenting the viewer with Saint Cecilia's transformation into relics, Domenichino

affords the worshipper-viewer with permission to behold Saint Cecilia in the act of veneration.

Guercino's monumental altarpiece for the Altar of French Kings in Saint Peter's Basilica asserts the presence of relics in relation to those of the martyr's father. The inclusion of a disembodied hand reaching from the grave below Saint Petronilla seems to be the hand of Saint Peter upon considering the temporal location of the scene. While Saint Petronilla's martyrdom occurred before that of her father, it seems Saint Peter is portrayed simultaneously presiding over the funeral of his daughter and receiving him into his martyrium just as Saint Petronilla is simultaneously interred and received into heaven by Christ. This familial connection between saintly relics also speaks to the clerical effort to necessitate the presence of clergy in lay devotion in an effort to create a homogenized Catholic Church during the Counter-Reformation when Saint Peter's position as first pope in Rome is considered. By effectively granting papal acknowledgement of Saint Petronilla's martyrdom from beyond the grave, Saint Peter's proximity to his daughter also underscores the respectful distance to the anonymous men who lower her into the altar.

This pointed attempt at the imaging of the transformation from mortal flesh to saintly relic is navigated in reconciliation to the circumstances provided by the respective Basilica church, or martyrium in conjunction with the unique circumstances afforded by body relics. While Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* provides a virtual substitution for the patron saint of Syracuse, Domenichino's *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* references the exhumation of Saint Cecilia as witnessed by Pierre Polet and insists upon the necessity of

clerical authority and gendered segregation in the formal veneration of martyrs. Guercino's *Burial of Saint Petronilla* employs the relatively unknown saint's familial relationship to Saint Peter in order to assert the presence and sanctity of her relics within Saint Peter's Basilica while invoking the authority of Saint Peter as the first pope in Rome.

In addition to underscoring the renewed interest in relics during the Counter-Reformation, *The Burial of Saint Lucy, The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia and The Burial of Saint Petronilla* relieve each virgin martyr from their bodies, which were regarded as inherently problematic within sacred spaces. This is to say that in order to facilitate the veneration of a woman during the seventeenth century, she must not only be pacified by death but destroyed and miraculously reinvented into a material which no longer bears the theological guilt of womanhood.

Although it is tempting to conjecture on the unique appeal *The Burial of Saint Lucy, The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia and The Burial of Saint Petronilla* made to women during the seventeenth century, it is difficult to say with any certainty that such an appeal would be of interest to either artist or patron during the Counter-Reformation. While there is no evident precedent for Caravaggio, Domenichino, or Guercino to provide an address to the plight or will of women in their decoration of altars as commissioned by male clergy, it could be assumed that their purpose was to entice men and women with equal tenacity as per the requirements laid out by the Council of Trent in 1563. Implicit in the three pieces' facilitation of veneration adherent to acceptable gender relations within sacred spaces, is respect.

The existence of women within the in the contexts of institutional asylums, marriage, and the formalized ritual in church may be characterized as tolerated rather than honored throughout the Counter-Reformation. Although their presence in church was expected, it was cited as the locus for the poor behavior of men. Although women achieved heightened autonomy, it was only afforded under the guise of chaste devotion. Bodily evidence of their ability to produce children, their principle role in society, stigmatized them within sacred spaces. For a woman during the Counter-Reformation, images of local martyrs likely provided them with not only a model for chastity and faith as the Virgin would have, but as successful navigators of womanhood who won against the pagan enemy, but furthermore gained notoriety in their community after death.

Upon considering the societal value placed on the modesty and invisibility of women, it is likely that a normal woman during the Counter-Reformation would only receive the ritualized attention of her community twice to her knowledge; the first instance being a wedding either to a husband or to Christ in the form of admittance into a convent and the second being her funeral. While the cult of Virgin surely spoke to women, it offered no attainability. Local martyrs, however, offered a local example of womanhood which was potentially relatable. Representations of Saint Lucy, Saint Cecilia, and Saint Petronilla who had been destroyed, repaired, and subsequently venerated by their community might offer a post mortem fantasy to a woman whose body had been subjected to childbirth or disease in the seventeenth century. Perhaps to women of the seventeenth century, the miraculous disappearance of evidence of martyrdom on

behalf of the imaged saint provided a fantasy wherein a woman would be remembered for the admiralty of her soul despite the inhabitance of her body.

In the imaging of women as a saintly ideal garnering the respect of their communities after death when there was no possibility of such reverence in life, it seems reasonable to assume that such reverence would be desired and inspire the faith of women. In imaging the invisible transformation from female flesh to saintly relic, Caravaggio, Domenichino, and Guercino also imaged an equally fantastical conceit being the sanctioned visibility of a local woman recognized in her own rite.

Figure 1. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Burial of Saint Lucy, 1608*



Figure 2. Domenichino Zampieri, *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia, 1614*



Figure 3. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, *The Burial of Saint Petronilla,* 1623



Figure 4. Michalangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew, 1599-1600*



Figure 5. Sano di Pietro, S*aint Bernardino Preaching in the Campo*, 1445



Figure 6. Giotto di Bondone, *The Miracle of the Crib at Greccio*, 1290-1300



Figure 7. Fra Angelico, *St Peter Preaching in the Presence of St Mark, 1433*



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