

The Chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*: A Case Study of Post-Tridentine Painting in Rome

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Introduction

Located in the Gesù, the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* houses seven panel paintings by the Abruzzese painter and architect, Giuseppe Valeriano (1542-1596), that relate the life of the Madonna. The subjects include *The Birth of the Virgin*, *The Presentation of the Virgin*, *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, *The Annunciation to the Virgin*, *The Visitation*, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, and *The Madonna in the Presence of God*.¹ The latter two paintings are positioned on either side of the entrance corridor to the chapel from the truncated transept, and directly across from the entrance hangs a fifteenth-century fresco that has been framed as an icon within a tabernacle. The chapel can generally be described as circular, but the perimeter is composed of octagonal bays, each separated by colored marble columns; two of these bays are open as portals—the first, already mentioned, is from the transept, and a second opens towards the apse. With the exception of the wall with the icon, the other bays display Valeriano's paintings with text underneath them that is carved in Latin on black marble, and each bay's ensemble—that is, painting and caption—is framed by red marble. Around the base of the vault, which is level with the top of the columns, there is gilded decoration in the form of garlands and Corinthian capitals. The visual sensibility of the colored marble, gilded decoration and paintings is comparable to a reliquary casket, an analogy enhanced by the fact that behind each painting is a shallow niche with shelves that contain innumerable relics.

¹ The *Madonna in the Presence of God* presents a particular conundrum regarding subject, and the painting has been described additionally as the Immaculate Virgin. Since the painting does not represent the attributes of the Immaculate Virgin that were standard by the 1580s—such as the crescent moon—I have chosen to use the more generic title, *Madonna in the Presence of God*. As will become clearer throughout the thesis, the panels reflect period interests in the interaction between God and humanity, and by recognizing the Virgin as privy to this type of interaction demonstrates yet another manifestation of the theme. Moreover, her role as intercessor for human salvation, a preoccupation found in Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, found a privileged place in the Gesù, which was triply dedicated to the name of Jesus, God and Virgin.

Approximately fifty years after Valeriano worked on the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* between 1584 and 1588, Giovanni Baglione published his *Lives of Painters, Sculptors and Architects* in which he recalled changes in Valeriano's style and his devotion to the Society of Jesus.² Despite Baglione's *vita*, which acknowledged Valeriano's contribution to trends in painting, very little scholarship has sensitively explored his personal ambitions as both a religious man and a painter, which culminate in his work in the *Madonna della Strada* chapel, arguably his most ambitious painting project. Baglione indicated that Scipione Pulzone helped with painting, but the degree of his involvement has been debated by historians.³ Valeriano also designed the vault fresco by Giovanni Battista Pozzo as well as the marble architectural embellishments.⁴ Gaspare Celio, who collaborated with Valeriano in the Passion Chapel in the Gesù and published a book on Roman churches and palaces in 1638, gave authorship of the chapel's architecture to Valeriano, contrasting with Baglione's account that the architecture was finished by Giacomo della Porta.⁵ Emma Zocca published comments on Celio's text and further argued for the attribution of the architecture to Valeriano, persuasively securing his design of the chapel in its entirety, supported by archival documents dated to the mid-1580s.⁶ Given the

² Giovanni Baglione, "Vita del Padre Giuseppe Valeriano, Pittore," in *Le Vite de' Pittori Scultori et Architetti ed Intagliatori: Dal Pontificato di Gregorio Xiii* (Rome: publisher, 1654), 79.

³ Gauvin Alexander Bailey has illuminated the debate in *Between the Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003), p. 215. While Baglione wrote that Pulzone helped with some drapery, Pulzone's name is not present in archival documents pertaining to the chapel. Federico Zeri asserted that Pulzone painted most of the compositions in the chapel, and Mari Calì also argued that Pulzone painted more than drapery passages. Sydney Freedberg has argued that Valeriano provided only the design. See also, Mari Calì, *La Pittura del Cinquecento* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 2000); Sydney Joseph Freedberg, *Painting in Italy 1500-1600* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970); Federico Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma: L'arte senza tempo di Scipione Gaeta* (Giulio Einaudi editore, 1957). For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to attribute authorship of the paintings to Valeriano largely because the sources agree that at the very least, he designed the panels. My discussion in chapter three about artistic training during the period demonstrates that those who designed paintings had a privileged status over finishing paintings, and while Pulzone's Northern color technique undoubtedly contributes to the style of the paintings, his degree of involvement remains questionable without textual evidence or Valeriano's original drawings for comparison.

⁴Bailey, p. 215.

⁵ Gaspare Celio, *Memoria delli nomi dell'artefici delle pitture che sono in alcune chiese, facciate, e palazzo di roma*. Fac Simile della Edizione del 1638 di Napoli. Introduction, by Emma Zocca (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Electa, 1967), 39.

⁶ Zocca, introduction, 60.

chapel's prominent location in the Gesù, it is surprising that few scholars have dedicated studies to the site and the implications of Valeriano's style and approach to the chapel's design.

Valeriano's panel paintings for the chapel, still in situ at the Gesù in Rome, conceal relics that are located on shelves set into the walls, creating a space that both justifies the use of images and relics in the Post-Tridentine Catholic Church and blends modern and historic styles to contribute to a visionary mode. On special occasions, the panel paintings are removed from the wall in order to expose the relics, further heightening a sense of tension between the past and present.⁷ The paintings additionally negotiate the function of images as both instructional and devotional, inciting mystical experiences within the beholder and raising questions about the role of religious imagination in visionary experiences and Post-Tridentine popular piety. By examining these works at the *Madonna della Strada* chapel, we can better understand how the paintings navigated both artistic and religious concerns, functioning as sites for both stylistic and meditative experiences.

The task at hand has been undoubtedly influenced by Pio Pecchiai's 1952 investigation of the Gesù's art and architecture as well as Pietro Pirri's 1970 monograph on Giuseppe Valeriano. Pecchiai's book published a comprehensive overview of archival documents relating to work at the Gesù, including a brief history that examined Santa Maria degli Astalli, the first church on the site that was used by Ignatius Loyola from the order's inception under Pope Paul III in 1540.⁸ The overview established that Valeriano's work in the chapel took place in the 1580s, and he acknowledged that it consisted of a complete design that included the cupola and marble columns and walls.⁹ While Pecchiai's contribution established a firmer timeline for work and restorations of the chapel, the scope of his research, which included all work at the Gesù, limited

⁷ Ibid., p. 251.

⁸ Pio Pecchiai, *Il Gesù di Roma* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1952), 4-8.

⁹ Ibid., 266-67.

sensitive interpretive research relevant to the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*. A similar limitation befell Pirri's monographic treatment of Valeriano, and while his insights regarding Valeriano's paintings in Spain, Portugal and Italy are of significance, they are overshadowed by consideration of his architectural activity. Pirri's research further demonstrated the extent of Valeriano's connections with Jesuit father generals and members of the Roman curia that is corroborated by extensive letters written during his travels as an architectural inspector and supervisor, and he additionally provided valuable insights into Valeriano's biographical record.¹⁰ Given the brief insights into the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* elucidated by Pecchiai and Pirri's research, a narrowed and interpretative inquiry of the chapel paintings is long overdue.

Research relating to the chapel that post-dates Pirri and Pecchiai's publications tends to accentuate an interpretation that Valeriano's seven panel paintings visualize the Council of Trent's decisions to uphold the cult of saints, the cult of the Virgin, and the use of relics and images. The Council of Trent published rulings on the use of images in 1564, which stipulated that sacred narratives be clear, accurate and moving.¹¹ Sydney Freedberg thus concluded that Post-Tridentine art exhibited "simplicity, legibility, and submission of aesthetic values to those of narrative or dogma."¹² Following Freedberg's emphasis on the didacticism of religious art of the period, Maria Calì viewed the paintings of the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* as superficial and as a direct result of the Council of Trent. She wrote, "The Counter Reformation church had found in Valeriano its most conscious interpreter, and in his bright and cold rationality the most qualified instrument."¹³ In general, these interpretations gloss over stylistic matters and deny a full investigation of the artistic strategies that contributed to an intended

¹⁰ Pietro Pirri. *Giuseppe Valeriano S.I., architetto e pittore, 1542-1596* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1970).

¹¹ *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Trans. by H.J. Schroeder (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1978).

¹² Freedberg, 419.

¹³ Bailey, 6.

subjective response to the works of art. While the chapel's relics and iconography are certainly in accordance with the emphases of the Post-Tridentine Church, nuances of the late-sixteenth-century visionary style have been understudied and generally misunderstood. This is, in part, due to a reconsideration of both Mannerist and Baroque art. For example, in order to establish interest in Baroque art, Rudolf Wittkower made paradigmatic heroes of the Carracci, Caravaggio and Gianlorenzo Bernini, but at the cost of the period immediately predating the 1590s.¹⁴ Similarly, visual production between the 1520s and the 1550s, or "Mannerism," has been revalued by John Shearman and Craig Hugh Smyth, but with few exceptions, a gap remains in the discourse between the 1560s and 1590s.¹⁵ This period has been called "Anti-Mannerism" and "Counter-*Maniera*," terms which tend to emphasize the Council of Trent's decisions about the appearance and function of images and has led to interpretations of these paintings as the antithesis of art theoretical and visual concerns.¹⁶ Consequently, religious art of the period has been discussed primarily as a foil to both Mannerist and Baroque art, and full consideration to the complexity of the period has been neglected.

In addition to general neglect of the period, scholarship has grappled with interpretations of Jesuit art and style that tends to isolate it from other period artistic trends. In the 1840s, German historians accepted a definition of *Jesuitenstil* that emphasized the order's propagandistic control of images in order to manipulate the masses with Catholic orthodoxy.¹⁷ By the twentieth century, scholars began to question the concept of a unified Jesuit style and focused instead on interpretations of iconographic schema particular to Jesuit contexts. This led

¹⁴ Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750* ed. by Joseph Connors and Jennifer Montagu (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹⁵ John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967). Craig Hugh Smyth, *Mannerism and Maniera* (Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin, 1963).

¹⁶ Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy: 1450-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). For a reevaluation of art of this period see Bailey, 22-30, and Stuart Lingo, *Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 3.

¹⁷ Bailey, 6.

to Rudolf Wittkower and Irma Jaffe's *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution*, where the authors ultimately denied that early Jesuit painting exhibited an interest in style in favor of a larger Jesuit conception. Howard Hibbard argued in his contribution that while the Jesuits' early painting at the Gesù had no stylistic continuity, an evident iconographical program reflects Ignatius Loyola's beliefs about ministry and conversion.¹⁸ Hibbard's observations about the theological source for the program, Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* (published in 1548, but in practice as early as 1521), and his argument about an iconographical progression from the historical realm upon entering the church to the divine realm at the apse as well as iconographic links between pairs of chapels across the nave is fundamental to our understanding of the early decoration of the church. His essay supports an investigation of the paintings in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* as both visionary and rhetorical, and while he reconciled the two in iconographic terms, this investigation seeks to do so stylistically.

Gauvin Alexander Bailey acknowledged the limitations of earlier publications and reopened investigations regarding the style of the early Jesuits. While Bailey's book demonstrated that the early paintings of the Gesù indeed reflect a preoccupation with style on behalf of their painters, he ultimately concluded that an uncertain visual climate caused the eclecticism that he saw throughout the church. While his ideas reoriented an investigation into late sixteenth-century devotional painting as regards visionary experience, he also offered a simplified reading of the styles at the Gesù as struggling toward universality, and therefore, legibility. When discussing the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, he wrote, "Valeriano, as is well known, has chosen a plain and generic style."¹⁹ He then contradicted this statement by

¹⁸ Howard Hibbard, "Ut Picturae Sermones: The First Painted Decorations of the Gesù," in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution*, ed. by Wittkower and Jaffe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 39: "This program, which unites the nave and relates it to the crossing, seems to illustrate the Jesuit belief that God's grace was efficacious only or especially through man's collaboration on earth."

¹⁹ Bailey, 246.

noting the brilliant coloring, derived from Florentine *cangiamento* and Venetian light patterns—perhaps qualities we could attribute to Pulzone—and further explained the compositional “timelessness and abstraction” by a comparison with Fra Angelico’s meditative frescoes at San Marco in Florence.²⁰ He also noted a similar interest in affective qualities that he compared “in spirit, if not in method” to Federico Barocci’s contemporary paintings.²¹ He did not fully develop or explain these ideas, perhaps as a consequence of the limitations of space, but they warrant further analysis and reconsideration.²² The painters of the early Gesù, as Bailey argued, indeed understood how to utilize pictorial qualities to enhance their aims. Yet even Bailey generalized the stylistic issues of the *Madonna della Strada* chapel and explained little about how the artifacts functioned in terms of devotion and meditation aside from an abstract appeal to the masses that he attributed to Valeriano’s experience in copying icons for the Jesuit missions abroad.²³

While Valeriano’s experience with icon painting, as we will see, is integral to interpretations of the chapel, it is also relevant that Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585-1590) campaigned to refashion Rome and revived the tradition of religious procession throughout the city, encouraging relic worship and the Paleochristian revival.²⁴ He was a member of the Franciscan order and exhibited a particular devotion to the Virgin evident in his writings about the Immaculate Conception and his construction of the Sistine chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore.²⁵ Steven Ostrow has pointed out that Sixtus V reasserted both papal supremacy and relic worship during the renovations of the Sistine chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, which began in 1585, by

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 249.

²² While Bailey sought to return to the issue of style, his discussions of the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* focused upon iconographic influence and subject, perpetuating the reading of the paintings as didactically driven.

²³ Bailey, 250.

²⁴ Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York: P. Lang, 1992), 246.

²⁵ Maria Louisa Madonna, *Roma di Sixto V: Le arti e la cultura* (Rome: De Luca, 1993), 9.

creating a space for his tomb and moving the chapel of the *Presepio* there in 1587, which included the relic of the manger of Christ.²⁶ The chapel of the *Presepio* was an original space of the early Christian church, and this relocation may relate to Sixtus V's identification with Sixtus III, who oversaw the original construction of the basilica.²⁷ Moreover, Onofrio Panvinio and Cesare Baronio, Post-Tridentine period historians, wrote about the fifth-century mosaics of the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore, which they believed historically reinforced legitimacy of the use of images as well as the cult of the Virgin.²⁸ This spirit of revival and interest in early Christian church decoration permeated the culture of Rome as Valeriano worked on the panels for the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*.

The recent scholarship by Bailey and Ostrow has undoubtedly revitalized interest in art of the period, but their respective focuses on the universality of Jesuit art and the patronage of Sixtus V precluded a more detailed investigation directed at how artists negotiated the visual to appeal to both popular spirituality and Jesuit intellectualism. The stylistic elements of Valeriano's paintings, for example, cannot be fully explained by their patronage by the Jesuit order. Federico Zeri examined art of the period and briefly discussed the *Madonna della Strada* chapel, acknowledging the reform-minded context of the Gesù's primary patron, Alessandro Farnese, to whom Giovanni Andrea Gilio dedicated his dialogue on history painting in 1564 and Gabriele Paleotti dedicated his discourse on art in 1582.²⁹ Zeri characterized Valeriano's paintings as "art without time," due in part to the stylistic abstraction of the compositions and Valeriano's apparent response to a reform of art, such as Gilio's call for a "regulated mixture" of

²⁶ Steven F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome: The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95. The historians circulated stories about the role of the mosaics for historical Church controversies. For example, Hadrian I had sent Charlemagne a letter that cited the mosaics in order to justify the use of images around the time of the Second Council of Nicea. The iconographic program also relates to the identity of the Virgin as *Theotokos*, the mother of God, which was established by Council of Ephesus in order to quell the Nestorian heresy that had denied her the role.

²⁹ Zeri, 24 and 36-42.

traditional and contemporary styles for church painting. While Zeri's insights about the function of style and reform-minded spirituality shed light on the degree of visual sensitivity that Roman artists put into their work, his concluding points that these ideas led to the character of missionary utopianism in Paraguay, which took place between 1609 and 1768, seem misplaced.³⁰ Despite the different conclusions that I draw from Valeriano's style, Zeri's book does play a role in the thesis, which attempts to base interpretation upon the experiences and ideas of late sixteenth-century Roman painters, theorists, critics, and Catholic devotees. In this way, my working method is aligned to Stuart Lingo's book on Barocci that examined the artistic strategies of archaism and their relationship to ideas about beauty, rhetoric and art theory.³¹ How exactly did Valeriano manipulate style in order to ensure a precise theological reading of the works while participating in a theoretically informed visual discourse about painting in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*? This is the primary question which this thesis attempts to answer.

The first chapter will explore the theme of archaism that is evident in both the fifteenth-century fresco, preserved from the high altar of Santa Maria degli Astalli, and Valeriano's panel paintings.³² Both examples demonstrate archaic trends in painting that are related to the concept of decorum, a mode of representation established in the Renaissance that took into account the appropriate visual expression of a subject. Rather than emphasize the didactic component of decorum that united it with Post-Tridentine clarity and defined the style as objective, which of course played a role in the creation of art during the period, I stress a consideration of subjectivity that privileges artistic creation and viewer response. Robert Williams has similarly argued that the use of decorum in the period can be considered as both the negation of

³⁰ Ibid., 67.

³¹ Lingo.

³² Pecchiai, 266.

subjectivity that allowed the artist to transcend his personal identity in favor of an absolute art and the highly personal, or subjective, artistic goal of the painter.³³ By applying this theory in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, I have concluded that Valeriano deliberately mixed archaism with modern painting to achieve both objective clarity mandated by the Council of Trent and artful art in the wake of Mannerism. This is very different from the archaism of the fifteenth-century fresco in the chapel, which sought a complete return to an older style. The juxtaposition of the old fresco with the new paintings can be read as an assemblage that acknowledged a growing awareness of the tensions between cult and art objects, not unlike the better known contemporary celebration of the *Madonna della Vallicella* at the nearby Oratorian Chiesa Nuova.³⁴ Hans Belting argued that Peter Paul Rubens' altarpiece demonstrated the separation of icon and art. He wrote, "The idea of the immaterial archetype, which was always embodied in images, is now, if only in the artist's imagination, made visible before us. Art now transcends the traditional image."³⁵ Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have recently questioned Belting's interpretation of the theme, and this chapel is an excellent case study for examining shifting perceptions of temporalities during this period.³⁶

By exploring the implementation of archaism, it becomes clearer that Valeriano sought to express truths of the Catholic faith that were highly personal to him in a way that would be legible to the viewer. The relationship of artist, message and viewer is analogous to that expressed in classical rhetorical theories. Evonne Levy has explored the use of rhetoric by Post-Tridentine Jesuits, acknowledging that their schools taught only grammar and rhetoric (and not

³³ Robert Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78.

³⁴ Victor Stochita has examined the combination of old and new paintings in *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67-76.

³⁵ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 488.

³⁶ Christopher Wood and Alexander Nagel, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2010).

logic or philosophy, disciplines that sought to derive truth).³⁷ Rhetoric placed emphasis on *ethos*, the capacity of the orator to embody his message, and Levy linked this to art theory of the period by examining Gabriele Paleotti's text. Paleotti quoted Cicero, who wrote that the function of rhetoric was eloquence, and the end of rhetoric was persuasion; Paleotti demonstrated the analogous function of images, which had the potential of bringing the viewer closer to God.³⁸ Valeriano's use of archaism, therefore, can be interpreted as a strategy to be clear and persuasive to a viewer, and this intention raises questions about the status of painting and its alignment to classical art.

Chapter two will explore how the imagination and period perceptions about cognition relate to visionary experience and meditative art. Bailey pointed out that Ignatius's concepts of "interior eyes," described in his *Autobiography*, and "composition of place," the basic principle of meditations in his *Spiritual Exercises*, are integral to understanding the space of the Gesù as a "mystical pilgrimage" through which an individual arrives at an experience with divinity itself.³⁹ The *Spiritual Exercises*, accordingly, emphasized the participation of the individual, and therefore, his imagination, by relying on sensory details summoned by the viewer's imagination. The emphasis on viewer response is critical; the Council of Trent defended the use of images as a method of instruction in order that the viewer might gravitate toward piety, as elucidated by Paleotti. Scholarship regarding Post-Tridentine art, then, has emphasized its iconographic didacticism and interprets the paintings as pure representations of sacred history, tightly bound to textual sources, which restrict the viewer's imagination. Bailey has argued that the paintings of the *Madonna della Strada* chapel exhibited this tendency, supported by the marble plaques located beneath each painting, which he explained function to caption the image and firmly

³⁷ Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁹ Bailey, 195.

anchor the narrative. He compared these captions to those found on the martyrdom frescoes at the Collegio Romano or illustrated in Christian handbooks in order to establish that they were intended as instructional objects.⁴⁰

The inscriptions in chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, however, reside outside of the image in both a literal and metaphorical sense, seeming to condition the viewer's emotional response rather than providing anecdotal clarity. The inherent ambivalence of viewer response to images has been usefully described by Klaus Kruger:

Accordingly, the image's constitutive ambivalence... between original and reproductive existence, between similarity and difference, is intimately bound up with its affects on the beholder. More precisely, we encounter the question whether the potency of pictorial experience on the part of the observer/believer leads either toward the fixation in the beholder's mind of something he regards as concrete and objective, thereby reducing the scope available to the play of fantasy by delivering the imprint of a complete and coherent illusion, or whether the image instead activates and liberates the imagination, facilitating the production of individualized interior images.⁴¹

Building upon this theoretical premise, a tension between perceptions of "similarity and difference" can also be applied to Valeriano's chapel. On a basic level, this problem finds its source in the assertion by the Council of Trent that images only allude to a prototype. This idea, however, is undercut by the belief in the potentiality of personal visionary experience, and period sources such as Teresa of Avila's autobiography and images themselves show a contemporary desire to reveal the sacred to the devotee in real form. The collision of the Council of Trent's call for objective, explanatory images and the subjectivity of religious experience is a crucial thread that runs throughout the articulation of the panels' style, and I suggest that this intentional ambivalence acknowledges an intersection of popular and institutional forms of worship.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 251.

⁴¹ Klaus Kruger, "Authenticity and Fiction: On the Pictorial Construction of Inner Presence in Early Modern Italy," in *Image and Imagination of Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Reindert Falkenburg et al. (Belgium: Turnhout, 2007), 42.

Chapter three will explore the specific influence that miraculous images had over painters during the period and will show how copying and response to traditional images contributed to a sense of artistic identity. Popular belief in miraculous images returned with support of the treatise authors, such as Paleotti's *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, which supported the idea that miraculous events occurred in front of images and "one can manifestly see how much divine power is satisfied with them."⁴² This power extended to painters' copies of icons, and it was Francis Borgia, third Father General of the Jesuits, who received permission in 1569 from Pope Pius V to have made the first copy of the icon from Santa Maria Maggiore, a copy Valeriano had access to during his time in Spain.⁴³ In 1573, Francesco de Reynoso, a Jesuit member of the Roman Curia, returned to Spain with one of these copies and invited Valeriano to join him. While Valeriano had associated with Jesuits on projects at Santo Spirito in Sassia in the 1560s, it was in Spain that he began practicing the *Spiritual Exercises*, becoming a Jesuit lay brother himself in August of 1574.⁴⁴ During this time, he painted copies of the Lucan icon at Santa Maria Maggiore for churches on the Iberian Peninsula, aligning his profession with his religious convictions.⁴⁵

By copying and imitating miraculous icons, particularly the icon of St. Luke, Valeriano identified himself with the holy personage responsible for both images of the Madonna and the Gospel of Luke. While this is not entirely novel because St. Luke had been associated with painting guilds from the medieval period onward, at the end of the sixteenth century, Italian painters reaffirmed the legend as they created art academies, perhaps in an attempt to resolve the opposition between text and image and promote themselves as "Christian painters" rather than

⁴² Scavizzi, 232-7.

⁴³ Bailey, 9.

⁴⁴ Pirri, 6-8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8 and XXXIV.

“secular painters.”⁴⁶ The essays included in Peter Lukehart’s study on the Academy of Saint Luke demonstrate the extent to which the Roman academy in particular attempted not only to educate artists in practical matters but also to provide for their spiritual wellbeing.⁴⁷ The imitation of icons demonstrates the development of Valeriano’s personal style, one bound to authentic visual forms of the Catholic Church but mixed with modern innovations in naturalistic painting. Achieving this mixture required the artist to exercise his judgment. Thus Valeriano’s paintings fit into a context that privileged the responsibility of visual expression and hence encouraged the cultivation of a personal and subjective style that could act also in the name of the Church.

A deeper reading of Valeriano’s style can thus offer a more nuanced interpretation for the chapel that is bound to art theoretical and spiritual concerns. While previous scholarship has contributed to understanding about the control of the Society of Jesus and artistic restrictions mandated by the Council of Trent, a reconsideration of style and viewer response can develop a deeper comprehension about the function of Valeriano’s paintings in the *Madonna della Strada* chapel. The chapel provides one case study that demonstrates many interpretative layers of Post-Tridentine art, which straddles the authority of the Church and the subjective act of creation and response. This chapel—located to the proper right of the main altar in the first large church built in Rome after the Sack—is indeed a powerful location for dialogue relating to both religious and visual rhetoric, a dialogue which this thesis attempts to unfold.

⁴⁶ For Paleotti’s distinction between “art as art” and “Christian art”, see Scavizzi, 134-136. For the formation of art academies, see Michele Maylender, *Storia delle Accademie d'Italia (orig. Ed. 1926-30). Five Volumes.* (Bologna: Forni, 1976). For more about the Accademy of Saint Luke in Rome, see Peter M. Lukehart, ed. *The Accademia Seminars: The Accademia di San Luca in Rome, c. 1590-1635* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁴⁷ Lukehart.

Chapter One: The Rhetoric of Retrospection

In survey texts, Post-Tridentine decorum has been discussed as the removal of extraneous and lascivious elements in painting and an emphasis on naturalism and narrative clarity.⁴⁸

Francis Ames-Lewis has linked the concept of Renaissance decorum to Leon Battista Alberti's discussion of the proportion and actions of body parts, appropriateness of figures' clothing and coloring, and the representation of movements and gestures that elucidate the emotional states of the characters depicted. Leonardo da Vinci also wrote about decorum, noting the ability of physical movements and gestures to contribute to the viewers' understanding of the relevant emotional and inner states of a character.⁴⁹ Scholarship has hence viewed decorum as a restriction that emphasizes the didactic legibility and iconographic codification of religious art. For example, documents from Paolo Veronese's trial with the Inquisition have frequently been used to demonstrate a restriction on artistic innovation, but in the end Veronese simply changed the title from the *Last Supper* to *Feast in the House of Levi*, a scene more befitting the figures in the painting.⁵⁰ This view of decorum typically interprets narrative as the ruling guide for religious art while overlooking the stylistic mechanisms that contribute to emotional response.

In the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, we can see the role of archaism in creating decorum by examining both the fifteenth-century fresco on the altar and Giuseppe Valeriano's narrative panels. The fresco demonstrates a Renaissance return to hieratic imagery; the anonymous painter sought to restore power to the image by using an overtly archaic style. Valeriano's panels, which were painted over a century later, show that a fully archaizing style

⁴⁸ John Paoletti and Gary Radke, *Art, Power, and Patronage in Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 513-26.

⁴⁹ Francis Ames-Lewis, "Introduction" in Francis Ames-Lewis and Anka Bednarek, eds., *Decorum in Renaissance Narrative Art* (London: University of London, 1992), 10-11.

⁵⁰ Paoletti and Radke. 214-6.

was no longer found effective, and rather, a mixture of archaic and modern styles could provide the best expression. His transformation of archaic elements into modern painting—namely his use of color, light, space, and iconographic types—achieved an aesthetically pleasing and spiritually bound expression. By focusing on viewer reception, he approached his subject intellectually, much like an orator, and it can be illuminating to consider his style as rhetorically motivated. His stylistic archaism could be beautiful as well as venerable, and my analysis will suggest that Post-Tridentine painters strove toward this combination in order to influence the emotions of the viewer. The focus on persuasion and the potential to effect the viewer's future actions aligned the process of painting with rhetorical strategies, thereby lifting the status of painting from a mechanical art to a spiritual or rational science. In short, archaism became a convention through which an artist could negotiate the demands for decorous paintings and the legacy of Renaissance art theory, which allowed the painter to function analogously with the orator.

After Pope Paul III approved the Society of Jesus as an official religious order in 1540, he gave them a small church called *Santa Maria della Strada*, and shortly after, the Jesuits began to make plans to build a new church.⁵¹ Mario Farrugia dated the founding of the original church to around 425 CE, placing it contemporaneously with the founding of *Santa Maria Maggiore*. Documents indicate that from the early twelfth century, the Astalli family had maintained patronage of the church until Pope Paul III transferred control to the Jesuits.⁵² In 1548, Andrea Palladio mentioned the church in the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* as a site of Jesuit devotion and apostolic acts, but unfortunately for our purposes, he did not mention any of the images in the

⁵¹ Pio Pecchiai, *Il Gesù di Roma* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1952), 4-8.

⁵² Mario Farrugia, *La Madonna della Strada venerata nella Chiesa del Gesù in Roma: Storia, Riflessione, Preghiera* (Rome: Chiesa del Gesù, 2002), 12. Other names for the church found in Medieval and Renaissance documents include: Santa Maria Hastariorum, Santa Maria Astariis, Santa Maria di Astara, Santa Maria Alteriorum, and Santa Maria de Scinda. See also Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992) and Pecchiai.

church.⁵³ Documents indicate that by the mid sixteenth century, the Jesuits had filed for permission to build a new church on the site, first under plans by Nanni di Baccio Bigio, and later Michelangelo drew plans for the project.⁵⁴ However, it was not until 1568 that the Gesù's plans were approved, under the patronage of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and his architect, Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, and the Jesuit architect, Giovanni Tristano.⁵⁵

From the outset, the Jesuits planned to dedicate a chapel to the demolished church, and a section of a fifteenth-century fresco was preserved and framed in the new chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, directly to the proper right of the main altar (fig. 1).⁵⁶ Gauvin Bailey has suggested that Ignatius chose the iconographic imagery for the new chapel, devoted to narratives from the Virgin's life, as well as for the chapel across the nave, located to the proper left of the main altar and dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan order. The chapel dedications related to Ignatius's biography because he had a vision of the Madonna that led to his conversion, and he patterned his apostolic mission after Saint Francis.⁵⁷ A recent restoration of the fifteenth-century fresco has removed layers of later over-painting, now revealing subtly painted drapery, but the figures are presented frontally while Christ blesses the viewer, which demonstrate retrospective trends in Quattrocento imagery. Indeed, the archaizing qualities of the

⁵³ Farrugia, 32-3. Nicola Courtright has written about the urban mission of the sixteenth-century Jesuits in Rome in *The Papacy and the Art of Reform in Sixteenth-Century Rome: Gregory XIII's Tower of the Winds in the Vatican* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ Pecchiai, 8 and 15. Nanni's plans were used in 1549, and Michelangelo drew plans in 1554.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 33. Robertson has also explored Cardinal Alessandro Farnese's patronage (see 181-196).

⁵⁶ Aurelio Dionisi, *Le Gemelle Del Vignola: Profilo storico-artistico delle Cappelle dedicate alla Madonna della Strada e al Sacro Cuore nella Chiesa del Gesù in Roma* (Rome: Tipolitografia 'Abilgraf,' 1978) and Farrugia. Gauvin Bailey also pointed out that the Martyr's Chapel in the Gesù provided a similar function and was dedicated to Saint Andrew, who was also the dedicatee of a former oratory on the site. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003), 194.

⁵⁷ Bailey, 195.

fresco show Renaissance interests in preserving early Christian and medieval hieratic imagery amid naturalistic ambitions for art.⁵⁸

While the fresco is anonymous, the archaizing elements relate to the Roman School of painting and also to trends epitomized by Antoniazio Romano's *oeuvre*. Antoniazio copied numerous icons, including the Lucan icons from Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Maria del Popolo.⁵⁹ While his exact copy no longer survives, his *Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 2) demonstrates similar qualities to the icon in Santa Maria del Popolo (fig. 3). He transformed the Virgin and Christ's physiognomy from a Byzantine style to a more naturalistic style by changing, for example, the Virgin's nose and reducing the heavy outlines of Christ's eyes. Melozzo di Forlì, Antoniazio's contemporary, also made a copy of the icon in Santa Maria del Popolo (fig. 4), but he chose to retain the archaic features of the original. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have discussed the choice painters made between archaizing and adapting styles in regard to icon copies of the latter half of the fifteenth century, and they argued that this led eventually to a distinct separation between cult image and art object.⁶⁰ The fresco in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* originated within this culture that was actively working out a solution between the older, authentic images of the Christian past in the face of stylistic revolutions of the Renaissance.

Although the fresco in the chapel is not a copy with any single source, it does share characteristics with the icon at Santa Maria del Popolo. For example, the Madonna holds the Christ child to one side as he blesses with his right hand. However, the fresco in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* depicts Christ holding a book in his left hand, presumably the Bible as

⁵⁸ Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have pointed out that naturalistic styles in Renaissance art, that is, using perspective, lighting, and texture to render a scene, reflects an ambition that art could abandon style altogether. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 112.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 109-110. The icon in Santa Maria del Popolo was itself a copy, and the original icon, dated to the mid-thirteenth century, was located in the church of the Carmine in Sienna. Antoniazio's copies date to 1469.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 114-118.

a representation of his identity as Word incarnate, abandoning the intimate touch between mother and child in the depiction at Santa Maria del Popolo. The touch between the figures in the latter example relates to trends in eleventh- and twelfth-century imagery that emphasized the potential for a “speaking image,” which Hans Belting argued related to the desire to narrate the image and link it to poetry.⁶¹ By archaizing the image, as the example in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* demonstrates, the depicted figures are restored to a “timeless” format and viewed as the visual manifestation of Christianity’s authenticity and hence institutional legitimacy.⁶² This is, in effect, how the fresco in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* functioned on a rhetorical level as an archaizing image type.

The preservation of the old painting demonstrates not only an interest in presenting Jesuit history by commemorating Ignatius’s first church but also a period tendency to revalue images created before the High Renaissance. For example, Giorgio Vasari wrote about the preservation of a fresco of the Madonna by Giotto during the renovations at Saint Peter’s basilica. He wrote:

To save the picture from destruction, it was cut out of the wall, supported with beams and bars of iron, and in this way carried away and for the sake of its beauty built into a place chosen by the piety and devotion of the Florentine doctor Niccolò Acciaiuoli, an admirer of great works of art, who lavishly adorned the work with a framework of modern paintings and stuccoes.⁶³

Vasari’s accounts of preservation and reframing are situated within a shift to revalue works of art for their historical authority as well as their devotional qualities. This interpretation hinges on the Italian word *pietà*, which can mean both “pity” and “piety,” and Nagel argued that Vasari

⁶¹ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 261.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 434. Belting takes the archaizing tendency in painting and sculpture back to 1400 and the International Gothic style, which used older forms, such as the fair skinned Madonna and certain drapery styles. He argued that for an image intended to be venerated, using an older style can produce a heightened effect. Belting wrote, “Material and form convey a sense of beauty that symbolizes a higher beauty of the Madonna (and the church). By its form the work seems to transcend the stone or wood of which it is made.”

⁶³ Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists* Trans. by George Bull (New York: 1965), p. 66.

deliberately used the term in an ambiguous way. In the first meaning, the work would be pitied for its impending destruction and rescued; in the latter sense, the work was preserved for theological reasons.⁶⁴ While this example demonstrates Vasari's interests in preserving authorial models and establishing a history of Florentine artistic geniuses that included Giotto, it also bears similarities to the situation in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*. The anonymous fresco has been isolated from its original scene, framed as an image relic, and surrounded by Valeriano's panel paintings.⁶⁵ Although the original fresco is anonymous to us, it represents an authorial artifact, grounded in the history of the original church, but when the Jesuits reframed the image, they endowed it with a character that denies its historicity since it was altered to resemble the traditional icon format.⁶⁶

This is slightly different from other examples of icon framing that occurred during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in which icons were invested with the authenticity of the cult image and considered miraculous objects. Belting has discussed the trend and argued that on one hand, isolation of the image related to popular forms of devotion, but on the other it represented the authority of the Catholic Church. The icon at Santa Maria in Trastevere, for example, was moved to a chapel decorated with scenes that depicted the Council of Trent, painted between 1584 and 1589, and the icon at Santa Maria Maggiore was placed in a gilt bronze, sculptural frame in the Pauline chapel in 1613.⁶⁷ While these images were painted between the sixth and eighth centuries, and therefore not verifiably ancient, people venerated them as if they originated during Christian antiquity. Nagel and Wood have demonstrated that during the medieval period, this veneration took on the form of over-painting as a means of

⁶⁴ Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11-13.

⁶⁵ The paintings that are set into the tabernacle itself are seventeenth-century additions, and for the purpose of this chapter I have chosen not to examine them in depth.

⁶⁶ Nagel and Wood.

⁶⁷ Belting, 486.

restoring the icon to its original glory, but during the Renaissance, they were placed on altars and venerated for their archaic qualities.⁶⁸ The fresco in the *Madonna della Strada* chapel demonstrates a continuation of both methods for honoring the image. Although it had been painted in the fifteenth century, in 1638 gold crowns were added to the image, a trend popular in Rome at the time. In the nineteenth century, the image was probably painted over before its second coronation, which occurred in 1885 (fig. 5).⁶⁹ At any rate, the image in the sixteenth century was framed and venerated precisely because it was old and exemplary of an archaic style in comparison to modern painting.

The tension between icon and modern painting is also evident in the presentation of the *Madonna della Vallicella* in the Chiesa Nuova, which was in control of the Oratorians, another new religious order of the sixteenth century (fig. 6). The fresco of the Madonna and Child is presented at the center of Peter Paul Rubens' painting of 1608 as if it is an image carried to earth by *putti*, and the icon is revealed only when Rubens' copy on a panel covering the image is removed. Belting argued that this example demonstrated that the purpose of contemporary painting was to establish a response to the icon, which stylistically contrasted with Rubens' painting.⁷⁰ Victor Stoichita slightly shifted the argument and interpreted the collage as an example of early modern intertextuality, again emphasizing the frame-painting as the mediator between viewer and icon.⁷¹ These interpretations presuppose the traditional value of the older image as a cult object, a special genre that could only be tapped through copying and presentation. Nagel and Wood have argued, however, that the two categories were originally not

⁶⁸ Nagel and Wood, 71-84.

⁶⁹ Pecchiai, 266. Pecchiai discussed the coronations of the images, but did not date the over-painting. The second coronation occurred because the first crowns had been stolen in the 19th century.

⁷⁰ Belting, 486-7. Belting briefly described the history of the icon, stating that in 1537, the image had been revered as miraculous according to reports that it had bled. He did not give a date for the original fresco.

⁷¹ Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* trans. by Anne-Marie Glasheen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76.

so diametrically opposed during the fifteenth century and that later in the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, painting retrospectively produced a “mythic” value for the older objects.⁷² Regardless of when the older images claimed their authority—either through their origin or presentation—historians agree that by the late sixteenth century the juxtaposition of old and new became an artistic problem that conditioned contemporary painting.

The idea that iconic images were linked to heavenly origins and able to cause a devout response within the viewer was not particularly new in the sixteenth century, but the impact on contemporary painting seems to have changed. David Freedberg has argued that reverence for archaic styles began in antiquity, evidenced by Pausanias’s writing; the *xoana*, the earliest Greek cult sculptures, were valued because they were more rudimentary than contemporary works of art.⁷³ Hans Belting has suggested that in the sixteenth century, this response was due to the unmediated nature of older styles—if the object appeared less artistic, then it claimed a status of authenticity that was intentionally emphasized by the juxtaposition with modern painting. The legible authenticity functioned as a “concealed” argument that ultimately expressed the Counter-Reformation’s reestablishment of the use of images and relic worship.⁷⁴ Whether the old images were associated with legends and miracles or simply commemorated an earlier time and place like the fresco in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, their archaic qualities not only signified a higher status than contemporary art but also an ideal for religious painting. In the Gesù, this relationship is made apparent by a plaque that Ottavio Panciroli mentioned in a guide written for a Jubilee year that stated, “*Astalli generosa domus, cultuque sacrorum, Atque opibus*

⁷² Nagel and Wood, 117-8.

⁷³ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), 33-37.

⁷⁴ Belting, 16.

pollens, opus hoc fecere decorum.”⁷⁵ The use of the term “decorous” related directly to the ability of the old—the original site embodied by the preserved fresco—to affect the viewer’s emotions and devotion, and this is the element that Valeriano honed when he painted his compositions for the chapel.

In Post-Tridentine Rome a theoretical focus on the visual use of decorum found definition in Giovanni Andrea Gilio’s *A Dialogue on the Abuse of History by Painters*, published in 1564. Gilio’s ideas grew from Renaissance predecessors like Alberti and Leonardo, but he emphasized that a painter of true histories should be able to accommodate his painting to the time and place depicted, ultimately arguing that the artist should know the subject represented.⁷⁶ Charles Dempsey has demonstrated that Gilio broke the subjects of painting into three classes—the true, the fictive, and the fabulous—and Christian histories, falling under the category of truth and aiming to instruct the illiterate, should be represented in a direct and clear fashion.⁷⁷ Gilio elaborated on decorum by stating that stylistic factors, such as color and light, also had potential to impact the viewer, and he explicitly tied these elements to the concept by calling for a “simple and pure” style for history painting.⁷⁸ Throughout the *Dialogue*, he referred to ancient painters, those who came before Michelangelo and whose style he privileged as evincing truth and devotion more than modern painting. He admitted, however, that older art had representational limitations and that painters should mix archaic and modern styles in order to achieve a “regulated mixture” that was best suited for conveying the message of Christian histories.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Farrugia, 17-18. Farrugia gave the Italian translation of the text as, “Il casato generoso degli Astalli, dotato di mezzi/e di riverenza verso le realta santé, fece quest’opera decorosa.” Which Jubilee is unclear; he stated that the guide was written in 1600 but published in 1625. Farrugia also points out the commemoration of the Astalli family and notes two crests in the church that united the Astalli and Massimi families.

⁷⁶ Giovanni Andrea Gilio, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de’ pittori circa l’istorie*, reprinted in Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento: Fra Manierismo e Controriforma* (Bari: G. Laterza, 1961), p. 20-27.

⁷⁷ Charles Dempsey, “Mythic Inventions in Counter-Reformation Painting” in P.A. Ramsey, ed., *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth* (New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 64-5.

⁷⁸ Gilio, 36-8.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Valeriano and Gaspare Celio's *Crucifixion* in the Passion Chapel (fig. 7) demonstrates the impact of Alberti's and Leonardo's ideas about decorum as well as Gilio's regulated mixture. John Paoletti and Gary Radke have shown that the running Roman figure, modeled on ancient statuary and located in the foreground, gestures upward in a "spasm of emotion" and conditions a similar response from the viewer. Jerusalem is even depicted in the background, creating the appropriate setting for the narrative, and Christ is depicted as a pristine and illuminated icon within the scene, which enhances the devotional aspect of the composition.⁸⁰ The gestures and narrative elements relate to an emphasis on the appropriate time and place for Christ's Passion, but the insertion of a triumphant rather than a suffering Christ increases the meditational capacity of the image. Indeed, the iconographic forbear of the composition is Gerard David's *Christ Nailed to the Cross* (fig. 8), which demonstrates that Valeriano and Celio used a format that was foreign to Rome and exemplary of Northern meditative art.⁸¹ Gilio's prescription for a regulated mixture finds response in the composition not only through the amalgamation of various gestures but also by blending archaic and modern painting styles.⁸²

Valeriano's incorporation of archaisms and devotional imagery, like the Christ in the *Crucifixion*, demonstrates his alignment with Gilio's ideas and contemporary trends to present "modern icons."⁸³ Stuart Lingo examined the importance of traditional imagery in Federico Barocci's *Visitation* (fig. 9), noting specifically the Virgin's aristocratic profile and centrality in the image although she is slightly off centered. These elements established the Virgin's venerability while retaining interests in presenting the historical narrative, thus reconciling Post-

⁸⁰ Paoletti and Radke. 520.

⁸¹ Federico Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma: L'arte senza tempo di Scipione da Gaeta* (Giulio Einaudi editore, 1957), 69.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Stuart Lingo, *Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 88.

Tridentine reform and Renaissance theory.⁸⁴ Valeriano's depiction of the Visitation in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* also displays the Virgin in profile and moving toward the center line of the composition (fig. 10). Valeriano's *Betrothal* (fig. 11) provides another example of blending the expressive power of iconicity within a narrative; the Virgin slightly swoons in a serpentine curve, reminiscent of Gothic courtly sculpture, while her arm and finger point to Joseph's, forming the sole diagonal line at the center of the painting that seemingly points to her. Indeed, Federico Zeri has stated that Valeriano's compositions exhibit the best examples of the regulated mixture and a solution for the problems facing sacred painting.⁸⁵

Furthermore, Valeriano's use of dramatic light and high value color also reflects interests in retrospective style that moves beyond iconography. Giovanni Baglione wrote that in his early career Valeriano imitated the "dark" manner of Sebastiano del Piombo, implicitly commenting on the use of light and shadow to emphasize figures.⁸⁶ Valeriano changed his style for the compositions in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, and the *Betrothal* in particular demonstrates his interest in shading with pure hues. On the right side of the priest's drapery, for example, Valeriano created a deep shadow by using a highly saturated green pigment, and he only used black in the background of the composition. The shadow of the drapery is contrasted with the priest's left side, which protrudes slightly because of his *contrapposto* posture, and here Valeriano has painted scintillating highlights with white pigment.⁸⁷ Cennino Cennini's system from around 1390 described the mixture of pure pigments with white in order to achieve

⁸⁴ Ibid., 87-8.

⁸⁵ Zeri, 67.

⁸⁶ Giovanni Baglione, *Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori, Architetti, ed Intagliatori: Dal Pontificato di Gregorio XIII. Del 1572. Fino a' Tempi di Papa Urbano VIII* (Naples, 1642), 78-9. Marcia Hall, *Color and Meaning: Practice and Theory in Renaissance Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 137-42. Hall discussed Sebastiano's color and technique.

⁸⁷ While it is unclear whether Valeriano worked from a white ground, adding pigments and shadows after the fact is unclear, but his drapery has luminosity similar to the Venetians. On Venetian painting, see Hall, *Color*, 199-217.

variations in light and color,⁸⁸ but Valeriano's use of oil and modern brushwork for the technique resulted in a striking similarity to the color and luster of *tesserae* of ancient mosaic programs.⁸⁹ Even Valeriano's choice of painting on wood panel rather than canvas reflects a similar archaism of style that more generally relates to older methods of painting.

In addition to iconographic and color archaism, Valeriano's compositions depict the narrative scenes in an ambiguous space that frequently eschews a clear linear perspective for a less illusionistic construction. The *Visitation* (fig. 10), for example, depicts the narrative inside a vaulted space, and while the architectural lines recede into the distant landscape the foreground contains no orthogonal lines at all. A similar situation is evident in the *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 12), but the only receding line occurs on the tiled floor in the foreground. If the line is extended, a vanishing point probably lies in the central and lowest *putto* in the clouds, but Valeriano obscured any lines from the architecture. This construction collapses the space into two grounds—background and foreground—and omits middle grounds or recessionary planes altogether, producing a space box more than an optically correct or illusionistic space. Valeriano also used this construction for the *Presentation* (fig. 13) and *Betrothal* (fig. 11), and his omission of architecture and horizon lines entirely for the other three compositions takes the deliberate distortion even further. I will discuss the other three compositions in chapter two, but the effect of those mentioned here is a suggestion of lateral movement as the figures are isolated to the foreground, which visually aligns them to the pictorial programs found in older art forms, such as those in the medieval mosaics of *Santa Maria Maggiore* (fig. 14).

⁸⁸ Hall, *Color*, 14-18.

⁸⁹ Laura Russo, "Cappella Caetani-Orsini (*della Madonna della Strada*)" in Maria Luisa Madonna, ed., *Roma di Sisto V: Le arti e la cultura* (Rome: De Luca, 1993), 180. Lingo has noted a similar light effect in Barocci's work, linking it to the influence of mosaics at San Marco in Venice (204-5).

By calling attention to color and light, Post-Tridentine painters could find a way to ensure that their paintings were visually interesting without overstepping the boundaries set by reformers. Lingo has argued that Barocci's use of color related directly to the reception of his work as *vago*, or sensually beautiful. Through his application of color, his paintings could appeal universally and capture the eye of devotees from all literacy levels while avoiding erotic figures in religious compositions.⁹⁰ Giulio Mancini, a doctor associated with the Jesuits in the early-seventeenth century, wrote about a similar function for the use of color, which he described as the medium through which beauty can be conveyed to the viewer.⁹¹ Mancini thereby associated color with the affective potential of the visual, and by coupling this with stylistic archaism, style in general can be interpreted as establishing both the timeless authority of the Church, because of its similarity to older artifacts, as well as decorous history painting, because of its ability to affect the viewer's emotions. It is this relationship—painter, painting, viewer—that became a major concern in Post-Tridentine Rome, and the solution was to identify painting with the art of rhetoric, which was traditionally placed among the highest of the philosophical sciences, and thereby raised the status of painting.⁹²

In order to understand how this transpired, it is relevant to digress briefly to examine a similar trend that occurred in sixteenth-century characterizations of poetry. Bernard Weinberg examined the shifting view of poetry during the Renaissance that both raised its standing in the sciences and aligned it with rhetoric and history. Generally speaking, theorists began to align poetry with logic, grammar, rhetoric and history as a discursive or instrumental science. For

⁹⁰ Lingo, *Federico Barocci*, 190-192.

⁹¹ Giulio Mancini. *Considerations on Painting* trans. by Theron Bowcutt Butler, "Giulio Mancini's Considerations on Painting" (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 170-171.

⁹² Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy of Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York: P. Lang, 1992), 95. Scavizzi has shown that Gilio emphasized narrative clarity and accuracy, called for a naturalistic style, and ultimately argued that painters should respect decorum in historical painting. Thus he viewed Gilio's text as aligning the painter's task to the theologian's, which necessarily considered audience and presentation for instruction.

example, Angelo Poliziano categorized the sciences in the *Panepistemon*, published in 1498, and placed poetry alongside rhetoric, history, logic, and grammar under the highest philosophical category, the rational.⁹³ Since words were the basic units of poetry, thus signifying a deeper meaning, theorists were concerned with the poet's intention and the poem's reception. Sperone Speroni's *Dialogue on Rhetoric*, published in 1542, for example, categorized arts as pleasurable, which he then broke into two categories—bodily pleasure and spiritual pleasure. While he considered painting a bodily pleasure (since it is perceived by the eyes), he categorized poetry and rhetoric as spiritual because they appealed to the mind. In this schema, however, rhetoric maintained supremacy because it sought to delight and persuade, and poetry aimed to only delight.⁹⁴ By the latter half of the century, poetry was associated with instruction as well, and according to Lionardo Salviati's *Il Lasca*, published in 1584, both history and poetry were aligned as instructing by means of pleasure.⁹⁵ Thus the elevation of poetry throughout the sixteenth-century related to its ability to appeal intellectually through instruction and pleasure, roles that had traditionally been given to rhetoric and history.

While the above theorists typically placed painting as a mechanical art and therefore inferior to philosophical inquiry, other period texts demonstrate a trend to associate painting with rhetoric and history. Lodovico Dolce, for example, wrote about the process of creating a painting through stages that relate to invention, design, and color. Rensselaer Lee linked Dolce's theory to the stages of rhetoric—invention, disposition, and elocution—and noted the analogous qualities between the two arts. Both rhetoric and painting began with invention, which included the choice of subject and material. Disposition in rhetoric concerned the structural flow of

⁹³ Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), 3-4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

discourse, just as design related to the compositional formatting in painting. Last, elocution in rhetoric was the final expression through language and coloring the final expression of a painting.⁹⁶ In addition, not only the process of painting linked it to rhetoric but also the aim of the art. Bartolomeo Cavalcanti's *La Retorica*, published in 1559, demonstrated that the ultimate achievement of rhetoric was the capacity for persuasion, an end that necessarily emphasized the receiver's potential action.⁹⁷ Thus the Council of Trent's decree that painting should be clear, instruct the viewer, and move them towards piety was in itself a reflection of period theorists drawing analogies between the functions of visual art and rhetoric.

Indeed, Gilio was intimately familiar with the categorization of the sciences, and his call for the use of decorum in painting reflects a certain privileged status for the art. In 1580 he published *La topica poetica*, in which he linked poetry to rhetoric because the ends were similar; both included the ability to delight, to persuade and to be agreeable. He argued that the words of poetry must be chosen appropriately for the subject, which relates to decorum. Thus words—as a fundamental component to both rhetoric and poetry—must be chosen with the intent of resonating with a listener or reader⁹⁸. His *Dialogue*, which was published much earlier, also contained elements that link painting to rhetoric. His classification of painting into distinct categories—his poetical, historical, and mixed modes—asserted that painting was capable of achieving multiple ends.⁹⁹ His major concern lay, however, with the public, historical mode that depicted sacred histories, for which he argued a regulated mixture of traditional and modern style was well suited. His acknowledgment of style as a purveyor of meaning is analogous to the

⁹⁶ Rensselaer Lee, "Ut pictura poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting" in *The Art Bulletin*, 22:4 (Dec., 1940), p. 264. (Appendix 2: "Inventio, Dispositio, Elocutio")

⁹⁷ Dominic LaRusso, "Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance" in James Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1983), 48-50.

⁹⁸ Weinberg, 205-6.

⁹⁹ Robert Williams has argued a similar point, stating, "All knowledge is equally at the disposal of art and subordinable to it: Art comes to be understood as a superintendency of knowledge, a form of knowledge or mode of knowing that necessarily involves a mastery of other modes and is distinguished by being potentially, ideally, a mastery of all modes." *Art, Theory and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4-19.

words of an orator, chosen and ordered with care for greater understanding of the recipient.¹⁰⁰

Painting, then, became an intellectual endeavor much in line with the higher philosophical categories rather than the mechanical arts.

By following the rules of decorum as prescribed by Gilio, painters could thereby unify the subject of the painting and the intention to educate and move the viewer toward greater piety. In Valeriano's compositions in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, this took on the form of stylistic archaism that related to light, color, and the transformation of traditional imagery into modern narratives. By using a style that captured familiar forms, he could tap into the cultural knowledge of the viewers, be they pilgrim or intellectual. Gauvin Bailey has suggested that the chapel functioned as the most public site in the *Gesù* because it housed relics and an icon, the latter linked to the former church whose foundation dates to Christian antiquity.¹⁰¹ The pilgrims visiting the chapel could recognize the traditional forms within the compositions and thereby relate the site to the history and geographical reach of the Church. Intellectuals could contemplate the images in the same way, or they could more specifically relate the forms to items they might hold in their own collections. Color and light also related to the ability of the viewer to find the image compelling and devotionally moving, the sensual stage of Gabriele Paleotti's description about the role of pleasure in cognitive function. Valeriano used style and decorum, neither subordinate to the other, to achieve consistency in the paintings that would be analogous to an orator using words intelligible to the listener and metrical consistency.¹⁰²

The use of decorum in painting, however, not only reflected the reach of the church but also the character of the painter. Martin Kemp has argued that as early as Alberti's treatise, we find the idea that painting carries the qualities that are innate to the painter. Thus the painter

¹⁰⁰ Scavizzi, 94-7. Scavizzi argued that Gilio's text demonstrates the intersection between theological and aesthetic concerns.

¹⁰¹ Bailey, 251.

¹⁰² Williams, 74-5 describes Horace's unification of subject and intention that privileges the discretion of the orator.

should be virtuous and also knowledgeable of the subject he depicts.¹⁰³ Later, Leonardo wrote that “each peculiarity in a painting has its prototype in the painter’s own peculiarity,” and “the very soul which rules and governs each body directs our judgment before it is our own.”¹⁰⁴ Thus the painter of religious histories had the responsibility to act virtuously as well as cultivate his knowledge of sacred history more generally. Valeriano, having established himself as a painter and architect in the early 1560s, turned toward a religious vocation by becoming a Jesuit brother in 1574 and was ultimately ordained as a priest in 1589, just as he finished the paintings in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*.¹⁰⁵ Scholars have occasionally derided priest-artists, but their particular understanding of painting, oratory, and Christian history became, especially after the Tridentine decrees, a highly sought combination.

By examining how archaism functioned as a rhetorical style in painting, we can better understand the complexity of the paintings in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* and a firm alignment of painting to oratory. The chapel functioned on one level as a site to commemorate the historical authority of the church, as evidenced by the fifteenth-century icon on the altar. The icon itself was painted in a deliberately archaic style, showing that the tensions between old and new painting styles pre-date the High Renaissance and the controversy caused in the wake of Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*. Valeriano’s panels, however, show a painter’s response to the artistic criticism of the mid sixteenth century. Decorum became a powerful tool that established higher demands and a higher status for painting. Valeriano’s solution was to use not only traditional iconographic forms, albeit in a modernized form, but also a retrospective style that emphasized color and light. By considering the stylistic elements as the basic components for

¹⁰³ Martin Kemp, “Virtuous Artists and Virtuous Art” in Frances Ames-Lewis and Anka Bednarek, eds., *Decorum in Renaissance Narrative Art* (London: University of London, 1992), 17-18.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ Pirri, 8 and 74-75.

painting, as words were the building blocks of oratory, painting could achieve a level of communication on par with language itself, but in purely visual form. Archaism could thus be interpreted as a convention for eloquence—a beautiful and affective mode of expression that illuminates the proper religious devotion within a viewer.

Chapter 2: Absence and Meaning

In Book II of *On Painting*, Leon Battista Alberti wrote that painting had the ability to “make the absent present.”¹⁰⁶ While this acknowledged a trend toward naturalism in painting during the early Renaissance, this basic function of painting continued to occupy a central role in theoretical literature throughout the sixteenth century. Giuseppe Valeriano’s panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* exhibit the Post-Tridentine manifestation of the theme of presence. How do they present the divine while maintaining the separation between material and spiritual substance? By reexamining the issue of sign and signified, or image and prototype, as it relates directly to Valeriano’s panels, we can see the oscillation between privileging and denying the supremacy of the visual object. This is evident by the addition of captions in the chapel, which ground the narrative scenes depicted, and the incorporation of music, another sensory mode that could motivate spiritual piety. These characteristics reassert the idea that painting is a medium through which contact with the divine could be achieved, but only by leaving behind corporeal sight as the imagination recombined stored images. At the same time, this privileged the status of painting as an art that required mastery of all other arts, and in particular music, for which it vied theoretically and sensually for affective dominance. Culturally influenced by the mystical milieu of Spain and Portugal, where Valeriano spent time on the Jesuit missions, the desire for visionary experience naturally privileged sight as a sense for communion with divinity. Ultimately the panels in the chapel demonstrate how what is absent can be presented visually by analogy to the visionary experience and religious understanding more generally.

Christian image theory, established first at the Second Council of Nicea in 787 and reasserted again by the Council of Trent in 1563, articulated a disjunction between the image and

¹⁰⁶ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* trans. by Cecil Grayson (City: Penguin Books, 1991), 60.

the prototype that underlines visual production and response.¹⁰⁷ During the medieval period, the concept of “devotional vision” necessarily separated the visual object from its referent through visual abstraction inherent in the production of Christian images and promoted meditative reflection. For example, Jack Greenstein wrote about the effect that contemporary vision theories had on Byzantine and Renaissance visual art. He based his ideas about Byzantine art on John Gage’s articulation of “optical mixtures,” a theory that the play of physical light on the artifact—which often had gold striations or used colored *tesserae*—could unify the image to create one visual perception in which the delineation of materials could still be seen.¹⁰⁸ These two images—the physical image and the second, visually perceived image—reestablished the man-made materiality of the former while implying the perception of a prototype, apparent in the unified image. During the Renaissance, this insistence on the referentiality of the image gradually eroded as Alberti’s theory of painting shifted representation away from the theological realm to emphasize the similarity of the depicted scene to the natural world through the use of perspective, natural color, and other mimetic modes of painting.¹⁰⁹ Although Gabriele Paleotti and Giovanni Andrea Gilio’s Post-Tridentine texts called for a naturalistic style in painting in order to clarify and instruct despite the viewer’s language or level of literacy, the Council of Trent’s decrees reintroduced a certain level of abstraction back into the theory of visual art and, moreover, into the theory of image reception.¹¹⁰

Paleotti, for example, described the way a viewer can gain knowledge of the divine through the reception of visual stimuli. He categorized the pleasure gained by the visual into

¹⁰⁷ *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. by H.J. Schroeder (Rockford, IL: publisher, 1978), 216, Twenty-fifth Session, “On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images.”

¹⁰⁸ Jack M. Greenstein, “On Alberti’s ‘Sign’: Vision and Composition in Quattrocento Painting” in *Art Bulletin*, 79:4, (Dec., 1997), 672-3.

¹⁰⁹ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration* trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 43.

¹¹⁰ Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso Intorno alle Immagini Sacre e Profane* (Rome, 1582), 76, Ch. XXIII.

three types—sensorial, rational and supernatural.¹¹¹ The process can be applied to the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, and the implications of each level demonstrate that although Paleotti was reform-minded, he maintained a high degree of sensitivity to visual form.

On Paleotti's sensory level, the chapel's colored marble columns and walls, crowned with gilded decorations, relate to the immediate visual sensation achieved through color and light (fig. 15). Valeriano has repeated the visual and tactile sensibilities in his paintings, and for the drapery of his figures he used patches of white highlight that dissolve into pure hues, resulting in a jewel-like luster. As discussed in chapter one, this relates to the perception of beauty, which is Paleotti's first step towards spiritual understanding. On this level, the visual has not yet been interpreted by the rational faculties, but the pure forms of color and light capture the viewer's attention through sensory pleasure.

On the rational level, a viewer begins to recognize the narrative and natural order of the world represented. In *The Presentation of the Virgin* (fig. 13), for example, he has divided the composition vertically by depicting God presiding over the earthly scene, which includes narrative figures in the foreground and a distant landscape in the background. The presence of a Greco-Roman rotunda in the background could signify Christianity's triumph over antiquity, thus legitimizing the Church and providing the appropriate setting for the narrative. The overall composition demonstrates a clear separation of the sacred and profane realms, which established a cosmological hierarchy according to Christian theology. God is located in the upper section of the composition, separated visually from the narrative scene by clouds. Stoichita has examined the use of clouds that appear in early modern Spanish vision painting and argued that they represent the "poetic (and rhetoric) of the approximative." That is to say, clouds are both solid

¹¹¹ Ibid., 71, Ch. XXII. Lingo has also discussed Paleotti's tri-level theory of cognition, *Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 166-7.

and effervescent, and thus have the potential to reveal and conceal, a device used repeatedly in Biblical descriptions about divine revelations.¹¹² God is therefore ‘beyond’ the limit of natural sight, but re-presented in the split composition.

The supernatural level further integrates the sensorial and rational levels to emphasize higher conceptual truths about the Christian faith. A discussion in Gilio’s *Dialogue* reveals that light can express the presence of the Holy Spirit, which has traditionally been symbolized as a beam of light above a figure’s head. The interlocutors go on to describe the Holy Spirit’s presence—and hence the presence of light—during divine revelations like Christ’s transfiguration, the ability of the apostles to speak in tongues, and Gabriel’s annunciation to the Virgin.¹¹³ In Valeriano’s *Presentation of the Virgin*, a condensed beam of light is displayed above the figures, but the drapery also exhibits patterns of highlights. However, rather than reflecting light in a naturalistic way—that is, from a single light source—Valeriano used highlights that are dispersed irrationally across the figures’ drapery. This is not unlike Cristoforo Sorte’s description of visionary painting when he wrote, “Moreover, it should be understood that the divine things that sometimes appear are always accompanied by a graceful splendor bathed in a soft light.”¹¹⁴ Light therefore functions on both the sensory and symbolic level, and in painting could become a way to designate the appearance or presence of divinity within the composition.

Nowhere is the use of light as revelation more apparent than in the three compositions that depict the Virgin in front of golden cloud banks: *The Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 16), *The Annunciation to the Virgin* (fig. 17), and the *Virgin in the Presence of God* (fig. 18). In these

¹¹² Victor Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reaktion, 1995), 84-5.

¹¹³ Giovanni Andrea Gilio, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de’ pittori circa l’istorie*, reprinted in Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento: Fra Manierismo e Controriforma* (Bari: publisher, 1961), 36-38.

¹¹⁴ Stoichita, *Visionary*, 84.

panels, Valeriano has capitalized on the unreality of the scene by omitting naturalistic backgrounds and a visual focus on recession.¹¹⁵ A sense of disorientation occurs with the omission of a horizon line, a device Stoichita called *historia de aire*, and the effect breaks down the position of the viewer in relationship to the scene depicted.¹¹⁶ These three panels, all painted with gold grounds, also resist the clear vertical separation of the divine and human realms found in the other panels in the chapel. In this way, they relate to a trend in vision altarpieces that has been examined by Stuart Lingo. Lingo argued that in the vision altarpiece, characterized by the possibility of representing the dual realities of the holy apparition and the human saint, painters sought to engage the viewer more directly than the traditional “sacred conversation” format by transforming its iconicity into a narrative.¹¹⁷ In Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna* (fig. 19), for example, the visionary figure in the composition visually bridges the boundary between sacred and profane space, represented by the painted ledge in the bottom foreground and a curtain drawn to the sides. The key difference in Valeriano’s compositions, aside from the fact that they are not altarpieces, is that the depiction of the Madonna is no longer mediated by a saint or a painted *trompe l’oeil* frame. Moreover, the light of Valeriano’s cloud banks retains a certain solidity that pushes the narrative to the picture plane, diminishing a barrier between the dimensions of the real and fictive space. In this way Valeriano provided (and controlled) a visionary experience for the viewer in order to heighten his/her emotional response to the narratives that he has conscientiously depicted.

Valeriano’s panels not only revealed the historical narratives from the Virgin’s life to the viewer but also simultaneously concealed actual relics behind the paintings. On special feast

¹¹⁵ Laura Russo, “Cappella Caetani-Orsini (della Madonna della Strada)” in Maria Luisa Madonna, ed., *Roma di Sisto V: Le arti e la cultura* (Rome: De Luca, 1993), 179-80.

¹¹⁶ Stoichita, *Visionary*, 94.

¹¹⁷ Lingo, *Federico Barocci*, 54-57.

days, the panels were physically removed from the wall in order to reveal the cult objects.¹¹⁸

Viewers presumably understood that the walls contained relics, and the overall sensory effect of the chapel is comparable to a reliquary casket, not unlike the *Shrine of St. Ursula* (fig. 20), which is made of Hans Memling's paintings and a gilded framework that contain the body of the saint. Craig Harbison interpreted the shrine as an indication that painting had achieved a privileged place in Netherlandish society because the tracery of the reliquary frame separated the space between the viewer and Memling's paintings, an arrangement that placed contemporary painting on the same level as the bodily relic.¹¹⁹ Jeffrey Hamburger has also noted stylistic similarities between Jan van Eyck's paintings and medieval reliquaries in terms of color, light and inscriptions, qualities that accordingly gave the painting the visual authenticity of the pilgrimage cult object.¹²⁰ Valeriano has also used these characteristics to validate the panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, and, in effect, the chapel itself has been transformed into an inverted reliquary casket. The paintings also condition the viewer's response to the relics, which would normally be visually inaccessible to the viewer.

Traditionally, the emphasis on the color and light of the Christian reliquary had an analogical association that linked the corporeal remains of the saint to the soul in heaven. Ellert Dahl has shown that the justification for the rich materiality of the medieval reliquary signified the glory of the saints' absent souls, which would be reunited with their bodies on the day of the Last Judgment.¹²¹ The material nature of the description of heaven in the book of Revelation

¹¹⁸ Gauvin Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003), 251.

¹¹⁹ Craig Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting" in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 15:2 (1985), 108.

¹²⁰ Jeffrey Hamburger, "Seeing and Believing: The Suspicion of Sight and the Authentication of Vision in Late Medieval Art and Devotio" in *Imagination und Wirklichkeit: Zum Verhältnis von mentalen und realen Bildern in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Klaus Krüger and Alessandro Nova (Mainz: von Zabern, 2000), 51.

¹²¹ Ellert Dahl, "Heavenly Images: The Status of St. Foy of Conques and the Signification of the Medieval 'Cult-Image' in the West," in *Aeta ad Archaeologiam et artivm Historiam Pertinentia* ed. by Hjalmar Torp and J. Rasmus Brandt (Rome: publisher, 1978), 180.

further legitimized the lavish reliquaries for the saints' bodies on earth and indicated their souls' presence in heaven.¹²² According to the *Libri Carolini* and Thomas Aquinas, all base material on earth, including the precious stones and metals that formed the receptacles for the saints' bodies, would be destroyed, which emphasized the temporality of the man-made artifact in God's plan.¹²³ Theologically, while these sensory stimuli could catalyze authentic religious experience, just as Paleotti outlined, the ultimate end of visual representation would culminate in supernatural knowledge of the divinity. Given this history, Valeriano's paintings, as products of the profane world, served to direct adoration through and beyond the material surface of the brightly painted panels and marble veneer of the chapel walls to the prototypes which they represent.

While Paleotti asserted that images are "instruments for uniting men with God," he also believed that visual data must be interpreted by human cognitive functions in order to achieve an affective end.¹²⁴ Optical theorists of the period also wrote about the reception of visual images, carried into the retina from objects, which were then recognized, interpreted, and recombined according to the internal senses.¹²⁵ Paleotti explained that images had the ability to influence the three faculties of the soul, stating that they "teach the intellect, appeal to the will, [and] corroborate the memory of the divine reality, thus producing in our soul the greatest and most forceful effects that nothing else in the world can generate."¹²⁶ He explained that after the images are received by the eye, they "remain firmly impressed on the memory for many years,"¹²⁷ and later the imagination recombines these mental images "to generate in us

¹²² Ibid., 182.

¹²³ Ibid., 180.

¹²⁴ Paleotti, 69, Ch. XXI.

¹²⁵ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15-16.

¹²⁶ Paleotti., Ch. XX.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 74, Ch. XXIII.

impressions so strong by producing visible alterations and signs in the same body.”¹²⁸ The physical signs that Paleotti noted could include crying and the development of the stigmata, but these external indicators were, more importantly, signs for a revelation that had led the viewer closer to God.¹²⁹ The image, therefore, begins to function in a highly intangible way after it enters the memory as a conceptual image.

The emphasis on conceptual images also found a place in Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*, which he began in 1521 and published in 1548. The *Spiritual Exercises* are characteristic of late-medieval traditions that he derived from a variety of sources—such as Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*, Ludolph of Saxony’s *Life of Jesus Christ*, Alfonso de Madrid’s *Arte para servir a Dios*, Jean Gerson’s *Montessoron*, and Abbot Cisneros’s *Ejercitatorio del la vida spiritual*—and personal experience.¹³⁰ René Taylor has additionally argued that Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* was influenced by Christian Hermetism, which included elements of Pseudo-Dionysian mysticism and the memory arts as expressed in thirteenth-century texts by Thomas Aquinas and Ramon Lull.¹³¹ The *Spiritual Exercises* functioned as an instructional guide for a four week set of meditations, during which time the participant contemplated his sins and various narratives concerning the life of Christ.¹³² During these meditations, the director asked the participant to use the “eyes of the imagination” in order to reconstruct sensory details of the setting while visualizing Biblical scenes like the Nativity or Crucifixion.¹³³ This practice, called “composition of place,” allowed for a flexible and individualized approach to meditation that Ignatius and other Jesuits highly esteemed, and

¹²⁸ Ibid., 80, Ch. XXVI.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 82, Ch. XXVI.

¹³⁰ See Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Between the Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003), p. 9 and John O’Malley *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 42-47.

¹³¹ René Taylor, “Hermetism and Mystical Architecture in the Society of Jesus” in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution*, ed. by Rudolf Wittkower and Irma Jaffe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 65.

¹³² John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, 1993), 37-40.

¹³³ Ignatius Loyola, *The Text of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (City: Newman Bookshop, 1943), 20. (First Week, First Exercise).

moreover, it was based on sensory data that had been stored in the participant's memory.¹³⁴ The *Exercises* do not specifically prescribe that a person meditate on actual images, but because they privilege image recombination by the imagination, the process begins with the real object. This is not unlike later Jesuits' literary visualizations of Biblical structures as expressed in Juan Bautista Vallalpando and Jeronimo del Prado's book on the Temple of Jerusalem, published between 1596-1604, and Athanasius Kircher's book on Noah's ark, published in 1675.¹³⁵ According to Giovanni Baglione, Valeriano created designs for illustrations in Vallalpando and Jeronimo's book that were finished by Gaspare Celio.¹³⁶ Using the imagination to reconstruct images, therefore, was not an uncommon practice and the Jesuits used it for a variety of ends.

Howard Hibbard noted an iconographical correspondence between the imagery in the Gesù and the *Spiritual Exercises*, which devote a series of meditations to Christ's passion, the Trinity, and angels, all subjects that have specific chapel dedications.¹³⁷ In order to fully explore how the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* functioned in dialogue with the images, however, one must investigate individual scenes. In the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, for example, Valeriano has depicted the *Annunciation to the Virgin* (fig. 17), which is also present in the *Spiritual Exercises* during a meditation on the Incarnation. Ignatius stated, "Here it will be to see the whole space and circuit of the terrestrial globe, in which so many divers races dwell: then likewise to behold in particular the house and chamber of our Lady in the town of Nazareth in

¹³⁴ Bailey, 8-9. Mary Pardo, "Leonardo da Vinci on the Painter's Task: Memory/Imagination/Figuration" in *Leonardo da Vinci and the Ethics of Style*, ed. by Claire Farago (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 64-67. Pardo describes the process whereby an artist conditions his imagination. See also Walter Melion, "Introduction: Meditative Images and the Psychology of Soul" in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Reindert Falkenburg, Walter Melion and Todd Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). The correlation between meditative and artistic imagination has been mentioned by David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 162.

¹³⁵ See Taylor, 65.

¹³⁶ Giovanni Baglione, *Vita of Gaspare Celio in Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori, Architetti, ed Intagliatori: Dal Pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572 Fino a' Tempo di Papa Urbano VIII* (Naples, 1642).

¹³⁷ Howard Hibbard, "Ut Picturae sermones: The First Painted Decorations of the Gesu" in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution* ed. by Rudolf Wittkower and Irma Jaffe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 38, 42-47.

the province of Galilee.”¹³⁸ Valeriano’s painting in the chapel is indeed quite different; he has foregone a mundane setting for a cloudbank that bears no resemblance to Ignatius’s text, except for a glimpse of a tiled floor, partly obscured by the golden fog. The figures of Gabriel and the Virgin are pushed to the foreground, and the gold backdrop obscures any sense of three-dimensional space. This shows that he limited details in the compositions so that they would not interfere with the personal meditation, but at the same time he provided a template on which to build an inner visualization. Michael Baxandall made a similar point about meditation and late fifteenth-century style, and he argued that Perugino and Bellini used a deliberately generic style of “interchangeable types” in order to promote the reconstruction of a personalized devotion.¹³⁹ In the same way, Valeriano concretely established visual anchors and expected that viewers could use them to build interior images.

The image thus becomes the medium through which vision—both in terms of sense reception and internal processing—fluctuates between controlling and liberating the viewer’s response.¹⁴⁰ This is not unlike Georges Didi-Huberman’s point about the function of dissemblance in painting; that is, the painting required the viewer to dissociate the material matter from the signified, which ultimately has no visual form in Christian theology.¹⁴¹ By using recognizable types in his “regulated mixtures” and conforming to a highly affective and beautiful style as described in chapter one, Valeriano ensured that his images could be memorable and function as conceptual images. In order to counteract the implicit freedom of the viewer’s imagination, however, Valeriano’s panels are accompanied by captions that reassert the Church’s presence in personal spirituality.

¹³⁸ Loyola, 36. (Week 2, first day, first contemplation)

¹³⁹ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 46-47.

¹⁴⁰ Klaus Kruger, “Authenticity and Fiction: On the Pictorial Construction of Inner Presence in Early Modern Italy,” in *Image and Imagination of Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Reindert Falkenburg et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 42.

¹⁴¹ Didi-Huberman, 9-10.

Scholars have traditionally interpreted the presence of captions in the *Madonna della Strada* as didactically driven because they correspond to the scene depicted, but their visual function in the chapel is much more nuanced. They are inscribed on black marble with gold Latin lettering and located beneath each of Valeriano's panels. They use verses from scripture—the gospels, Song of Solomon and Book of Psalms—that annotate the narratives depicted in the corresponding panel.¹⁴² This is very different from the captions that accompany Niccolò Circignani's frescoes in San Stefano Rotondo, which are written in both Latin and Italian and correspond to letters painted on the picture (fig. 21).¹⁴³ In San Stefano Rotondo, the captions serve to explain elements from the narrative that may not be evident from the painting in order to instruct the viewer. The inscriptions in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, therefore, function more in terms of their ornamentation and contribute to the overall visual reading of the chapel.

Although the captions are separated from the compositional space of the panels, both are framed by the red marble of the wall. When the panels are removed, however, the inscriptions would stay in place. This position resembles the placement of inscriptions on reliquary frames, a device that had traditionally authenticated the cult object.¹⁴⁴ If Valeriano's panels are present, they function similarly to validate the paintings. A comparable situation occurred in fifteenth-century depictions of vision experience, for example that found in Mary of Burgundy's book of hours (fig. 22). Harbison has argued Northern depictions of vision experience frequently

¹⁴² Bailey has translated the inscriptions: Madonna in the Presence of God, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Sol. 4:7); Birth, "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning" (Song of Sol. 6:10); Presentation, "The virgins shall be brought to the king after her. They shall be brought into the temple of the King" (paraphrase of Psalm 45:14); Betrothal, "The mother of Jesus married a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David" (unknown); Annunciation, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son; and they shall call his name Emmanuel" (Matthew 1:23); Visitation, "And it came to pass that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:41); Assumption, "Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke?" (Song of Sol. 3:6). P. 251.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 122-6. John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art, Power, and Patronage in Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 522-3.

¹⁴⁴ Hamburger, 49.

included the devotional book or an inscription within the composition in order to legitimize the visionary scene represented.¹⁴⁵ In the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, the inscriptions serve to legitimize the paintings, and because they are in Latin, they signify to the unlettered viewer the need for and authority of the Catholic Church.

Indeed, the relationship between image and vision experience was fragile, and the interconnections were consistently in flux. Greenstein pointed out that a common distich, composed by a Benedictine poet around 1100, frequently accompanied manuscripts and images that were intended to aid devotions. The distich stated, “Neither God nor man is the present image, which you perceive/But God and man is he whom the sacred image figures.”¹⁴⁶ The poem recognized that the image had a prototype and that God was ultimately unrepresentable; Greenstein argued, moreover, that the devotee should look for recognizable patterns that relate to the prototypical divinity, including dissimilarities between the visual sign and the signified presence.¹⁴⁷ Hamburger wrote about fourteenth-century devotions and particularly the view of Henry Suso, a Dominican monk. When explaining visionary experience, Suso wrote, “No one can explain this to another just with words. One knows it by experiencing it.” He then substantiated this claim by stating, “Every vision, the more intellectual and free of images it is and the more like this same pure seeing the nobler it is.” Thus Suso believed that one could only achieve a supernatural experience by denying corporeal sight and the process of the imagination, but he also recognized that theophanic experiences were ultimately indescribable.¹⁴⁸ Both of these accounts demonstrate the subtle tension between seeing and experience—and while sight was analogous to experience, the two were not synonymous.

¹⁴⁵ Harbison, 102.

¹⁴⁶ Greenstein, 675.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 675-6.

¹⁴⁸ Hamburger, 56.

Teresa of Avila also identified the separation of visionary experience and that of viewing a painting, but the fact that she analogized experience with painting demonstrates that the language of painting was an appropriate comparison. She described her first vision, in which she saw a resurrected Christ, by first noting the similarities to painting that evoke Paleotti's category of sensual pleasure. She described the vision as "beautiful" and noted "a splendour so innate it induces indescribable and untiring pleasure". But then she pointed out:

Sometimes when the clarity was not very strong, it did seem to me that I might be looking at a painting, but a painting quite different from those here on earth, even the very best. I have seen many excellent ones and am in a position to say that they are as different from one another as a living person is different from his own portrait: however lifelike it is, one cannot help but see it as something inanimate.¹⁴⁹

Stoichita examined this text and argued that by invoking the comparison between sight and experience, Teresa was ultimately performing a rhetorical exercise in which there were no words for the experience.¹⁵⁰ She also reasserted through her text that the material nature of images signify a higher reality, and however different they may be, the evocation of painting became the best mode for expressing the experience.

Thus even as the potential for visionary experience existed for the Christian devotee, a tradition had been established that reasserted the dissimilarity of the experience and physical object. Valeriano's panels provided the visual idea to be applied to devotions, and they could begin the process of bringing the beholder closer to God through their beauty and expression. However, because they are grounded by captions, the Church's control and authority over the individual experience of an image could be maintained. The presence of the captions in the chapel reasserted that the image and text were media, and despite their inadequacy to articulate

¹⁴⁹ Stoichita, *Visionary*, 45.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

in verbal and visual terms the essence of divinity, they could, according to Paleotti, “corroborate the memory of divine reality.”¹⁵¹

Paintings, however, were not only capable of re-presenting visual aspects of theophany but also other senses. On a theoretical level, the connection between music and painting related to their expressive capacities and adherence to decorum. On an iconographic level, the incorporation of musicians implied an additional sensory mode, and Valeriano included their presence in two of the panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, the *Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 16) and the *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 12).¹⁵²

Leslie Korrick has written about Lomazzo’s invocation of musical modes in his *Trattato*, published in 1584, which he used specifically when discussing the action of figures in painting. He wrote, for example, that the motion of figures should be represented gracefully and naturally, and if they are not, the effect is like discordant strings of an instrument. He elaborated by explaining that ancient musicians were able to stir the emotions of the listener by using different melodic harmonies.¹⁵³ The comparison of painting and music in relation to a basic principle of decorum can build upon Lomazzo’s analogy in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*. In the *Annunciation to the Virgin* (fig. 17), for example, Gabriel points upward in a sweeping motion to the dove of the Holy Spirit while the Virgin puts her hands to her chest and lowers her eyes, which could signify a simple melodic line of music, clear and direct in expression. The *Madonna in the Presence of God* (fig. 18), on the other hand, presents a crowd of celestial figures as a frame of adoration around the Virgin in a more fully orchestral arrangement that expresses the excitement of the scene. This pattern is repeated in the *Assumption of the Virgin*, which depicts

¹⁵¹ Paleotti, 69.

¹⁵² The vault, which was painted by Giovanni Battista Pozzo but designed by Valeriano, also depicts a court of celestial musicians.

¹⁵³ Leslie Korrick, “Lomazzo’s *Trattato*...della pittura and Galilei’s *Fronimo*: Picturing Music and Sounding Images in 1584” in Katherine McIver, ed. *Art and Music in the Early Modern Period* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 195.

figures radiating throughout the background, and some play musical instruments like a *lira da braccio*, harp and lute while the Virgin looks upward with both arms raised above her head. Gestures in painting have frequently been interpreted as mechanisms for narrative clarity—relating to emotions of the figures as they react to the subject of the painting—and by considering their similarity to musical compositions, a more nuanced reading of their expressive power comes to light.

In addition, the theorists of both painting and music in the sixteenth century attempted to shift their statuses from the realm of the mechanical arts to the liberal arts. Lomazzo used another analogy to music when he discussed proportion, another element of painterly decorum, and wrote that the parts of the body must be in ratio to the whole body, or the result is like mismatching modes of a musical composition.¹⁵⁴ As in music, the foundation of achieving an affective whole found its source in mathematics. Giovanni Balducci, a Florentine painter who spoke at the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome in 1594, also emphasized an analogy with music and proportion in painting. He wrote, “Just as the composer ensures that the low and high voices are in proper proportion to the other voices in the middle, so too must the painter take care that he makes well-proportioned figures, that he doesn’t join too big a head or pair of legs, that the other parts are appropriate to each other.”¹⁵⁵ While these analogies locate meaning in mathematical proportion, other theorists, such as Paolo Pino, emphasized musical analogies to show the expressive and affective dimension of painting. He wrote that colors and lines of a painting were like a musician changing the pitch of his voice or creating melodies with an instrument. He also stated, “This act should not be termed mechanical, for the intellect has no other means but

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 199.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 200.

the senses through which to express itself and make clear its meaning.”¹⁵⁶ Thus painting, as music, provided a medium through which the intellect has the ability to express itself in a comprehensible way, and by understanding the principles of both arts, the painter can enhance the eloquence of his work.

The appearance of musical instruments in Valeriano’s panels moves beyond the theoretical application of music and painting to reflect contemporary devotional practices. During the sixteenth century, liturgical music primarily used an organ, but devotional music employed instruments designed to accompany voice.¹⁵⁷ The *lira da braccio* and lute, for example, frequently accompanied improvisational singing throughout the Renaissance.¹⁵⁸ While these instruments were associated with secular song at court, they could also be used to accompany devotional songs like the “*Sancta Maria*” chant depicted in Benedetto Coda’s *Madonna Enthroned* (fig. 23).¹⁵⁹ In a more general sense, angels with instruments had been depicted in various narrative scenes of the Madonna since the fourteenth century,¹⁶⁰ and by the sixteenth century the relationship between music and visionary experience had become standard. Teresa of Avila, for example, privileged the role of music in catalyzing a vision she had of the Virgin who appeared just as she began a devotional song. She wrote, “At the very moment that the *Salve* was beginning, I saw the Mother of God surrounded by a host of angels descending from the heavens and placing herself....just where the picture of Our Lady is situated.”¹⁶¹ Thus music could function as a tool for devotional and spiritual movement alongside visual stimuli.

¹⁵⁶ Lingo, *Federico Barocci*, 216.

¹⁵⁷ Katherine Powers, “Musical Images for Devotions: Benedetto Coda’s Altarpiece for the Rosary” in Katherine McIver, ed. *Art and Music in the Early Modern Period* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 38.

¹⁵⁸ Alberto Ausoni, *Music in Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Publication, 2009), 257, 276.

¹⁵⁹ Powers, 36-8. Powers linked this particular *lauda* to a Northern Italian practice of singing the rosary. An interesting correlation with the panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* is that Coda’s painting was used to cover a niche that housed a statue of the Madonna of the Rosary at *Santa Maria in Corte* (p. 30).

¹⁶⁰ Ausoni, 138.

¹⁶¹ Stoichita, *Visionary*, 48.

In other accounts of visionary experience, music functioned as a sign of the opening of the celestial realm. For example, St. Cecilia, who inevitably became the patron saint of music, was an early Christian martyr. It was believed that when she prayed to God, the heavens opened and she heard celestial music, and Raphael's depiction displays a choir of angels as a heavenly vision (fig. 24)¹⁶² The sense of an infinite space of heaven is emphasized by the tight framing on the upper edge, and the music becomes the first sense received by the vision experience.¹⁶³ This is not unlike Dante's ascent into Paradise, during which he hears music that stops when he is finally able to see heaven.¹⁶⁴ These accounts use sound to alert the viewer to a temporary rift between the sacred and profane, but in the end sight was privileged as the ultimate sense experience of a vision. In the *Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 16), the Virgin is depicted in an ecstatic pose similar to Cecilia's; that is, her head and eyes are turned upward to the unpainted divinity, and the musicians in the background substantiate her ascent into the heavenly realm.¹⁶⁵

The musical *putti* in the *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 12) similarly function both to adore the Madonna and to announce her presence on earth. Two *putti* play recorders, an instrument used in the Renaissance to accompany dance, which contributes to the celebratory aura of the composition.¹⁶⁶ They are accompanied by *putti* playing a *lira da braccio*, lute, and a horn. The horn did not become a part of musical ensembles until the seventeenth century, but it had previously been used on military and hunting campaigns.¹⁶⁷ The incorporation of the horn signifies that the musical instruments in the *Birth of the Virgin* were included not only for an aural effect that could increase devotion but also to capture the viewer's attention. The horn

¹⁶² Ausoni, 148.

¹⁶³ Christian Kleinbub, *Vision and the Visionary in Raphael*. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 106.

¹⁶⁴ Lingo, *Federico Barocci*, 213.

¹⁶⁵ Stoichita, *Visionary*, 167-8. Stoichita has argued that the subject of Raphael's painting is the ecstatic vision itself since there are no sacred figures present and Cecilia turns her gaze upward, and her face was "considered to be the visible manifestation of the soul in ecstasy."

¹⁶⁶ Ausoni, 314.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 343.

announces the Virgin's birth, and while it sounds with the musical ensemble, it is not a part of the musical composition. The effect is enhanced by the pairs of women in the lower register; they have paused in conversation, their attention perhaps directed to the heavenly sounds even though they do not acknowledge the visual presence of the celestial interlude.

By incorporating music into painting theory and more obviously into iconographic form, painting could achieve a new affective dimension based on sound. An educated viewer might understand the theoretical premises of decorum in both arts, and by recognizing the overlap between them the paintings would be interesting on an intellectual level. Even if a viewer was uneducated, by including figures playing instruments in the celestial realm, they would respond to cultural knowledge of devotional practice and visionary experience. These characteristics lend force to the depiction of the sacred realm, and by re-presenting aural as well as visual aspects of it, Valeriano reasserted his painting as both a medium for knowledge of the divine and a catalyst for affective devotion.

The paintings in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* demonstrate the preoccupation of period theorists and artists with presenting absence. Divine presence within an object had never been accepted by the Catholic Church, and the Council of Trent's reassertion of this principle again established a clear disconnect between spiritual and mundane substances. Paleotti's theory of cognition articulated the difference between object and spirituality, and his description of how an object can lead to knowledge of God shows that he valued style and beauty in visual art. As the first level through which a viewer progressed toward rationalism and ultimately revelation, the visual claimed a high status as a mediator between spirituality and viewer, and ultimately the addition of captions and musical ensembles helps to express the analogical nature of the panels. The oscillation between the similarity and difference of divinity

and re-presentation results in contemplation of both material and spiritual natures, allowing painting to transcend its traditional boundaries but in a theologically sanctioned way.

Chapter 3: Valeriano's Practice and Imitation

From the medieval period and into the sixteenth century, optical theorists adopted Aristotelian models of seeing that were based on intromission. According to these theories, the *species*, or rays that were produced by visible objects, radiated into a medium, normally air, and took on the physical qualities of the object in order to transmit them to the eye. After the medium entered the eye, the internal sense received the rays and interpreted them as phantasms or intelligible *species*.¹⁶⁸ Early modern texts on demonology and optics demonstrate the extent to which theorists believed the process could be manipulated by supernatural forces. For example, in “On the Art of Magic’s Superstition,” published in the 1560s, Francesco Cattani da Diacceto explained that demons had the ability to manipulate rays, which resulted in false visions and hallucinations, and they could interfere with the reception of phantasms.¹⁶⁹ This raised concerns about the capacity of the image to convey spiritual truth and the ability of the painter to recombine received images when creating a painting. However, in Giuseppe Valeriano’s case, the tension between seeing and believing was resolved by a consistent meditation on older Christian artifacts that sought a return to a spiritually driven visual design, which combined archaic and modern painting styles while privileging the artist as a suitable judge for image recombination.

The anxiety of the efficacy of the visual could be overcome by the laity through the practice of actively judging received images. The theology originated in the thirteenth century

¹⁶⁸ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15-16.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Cole, “The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium” in *Art Bulletin*, 84:4 (Dec., 2002), 623-5. Jeffrey Hamburger wrote about the anxieties regarding visionary experience which had developed in the medieval period and were based on fears of deceptions like projections, dreams, and hallucinations, and argued that artists of the fifteenth century had adopted pictorial styles that acknowledged the tensions between seeing and believing. Jeffrey Hamburger, “Seeing and Believing: The Suspicion of Sight and the Authentication of Vision I Late Medieval Art and Devotio” in *Imagination und Wirklichkeit: Zum Verhältnis von mentalen und realen Bildern in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Klaus Krüger and Alessandro Nova (Mainz: von Zabern, 2000), 48-49.

and was known as “Discernment of Spirits” based on 1 John 4:1: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”.¹⁷⁰ Petrus Thyraeus, a sixteenth-century Jesuit theorist on spiritual discernment, wrote that human minds cannot tell whether an apparition is good or evil.¹⁷¹ Given this context, it is not surprising that Ignatius provided a section in the *Spiritual Exercises* that dealt explicitly with the problem. He wrote:

It belongs to the bad angel, transfiguring himself into an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul, and to come out his own way; that is to say, to begin by inspiring good and holy thoughts in conformity with the dispositions of the just soul, and afterwards gradually to endeavor to gain his end, by drawing the soul into his secret snares and perverse intentions.¹⁷²

Without determining a solution, Ignatius only prescribed that the director of the *Spiritual Exercises* be cautious of “the course of such thoughts” in an individual, and in the event that a demon has intervened, the participant should use the knowledge gained by the experience to combat the demon if it occurs again.¹⁷³ The method for discerning the appropriate means of representation in painting, as I will explain below, occurred through imitation of past compositions that necessarily involved a similar process of active judgment.

While Ignatius’s quotation demonstrated the ease with which evil forces could manipulate the will of an individual, artistically it also related to the problem of the figured angel, whose incorporeal substance cannot be seen by human eyes unless it transforms itself into a winged man. Ambrogio Catarino, a theologian who took part in discussion of images at the Council of Trent, wrote in *De cultu & adoratione imaginum* of 1552 that artists use the human form when representing angels because it is the highest level of reality that a human can see. He also maintained that the depiction of angels could teach the ignorant about them, but intellectuals

¹⁷⁰ Clark, 206.

¹⁷¹ Michael Cole, “Discernment and Animation, Leonardo to Lomazzo,” in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Reindert Falkenburg, Walter Melion and Todd Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 158.

¹⁷² Loyola, 112, Rules for the Discernment of Spirits for the second week (IV)

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 112-113, Rules for the Discernment of Spirits for the second week (V and VI).

should recognize that angels do not typically reveal themselves in human form.¹⁷⁴ Thus, the artist has the authority to represent the angel in its visible form, and the negotiation of bodily and incorporeal forms of the angel can be seen in Valeriano's panels.

In the *Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 16), for example, Valeriano has painted the angelic forms based on established Christian traditions but modified them to conform to modern expectations for art. Thomas Aquinas had described the visibility of angels as an emergence from the air, which metaphorically related to their materialization from the clouds. He wrote, "Although air as long as it is in a state of rarefaction has neither shape nor color, yet when condensed it can both be shaped and colored as appears in the clouds. Even so the angels assume bodies of air, condensing it by Divine power in so far as is needful for forming the assumed body."¹⁷⁵ Within Valeriano's cloudbank of ethereal heads and bodies, he has added a few pastel swatches of purple and blue drapery, not yet fully materialized from the condensed air, to achieve some variation of color. In this sphere, the members of the heavenly court play musical instruments and interact with one another, becoming fully attentive to the Madonna once they are materialized as *putti* in the foreground. Artists from the medieval period onward had frequently depicted *seraphim* and *cherubim* in courts of celestial beings in the clouds, but toward the close of the fifteenth century, painters began to use tonal modulations to dramatize the composition while rendering clouds more naturalistically. Christian Kleinbub has noted that over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, painters developed "golden cloud glories" out of the naturalization of the more traditional *mandorla*, which had previously demarcated the spaces of the divine realm and the profane world. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, Raphael's heavenly court in the *Disputa* (fig. 25) had become a visual

¹⁷⁴ Cole, "Discernment", 138.

¹⁷⁵ Kleinbub, 28.

panorama of various methods to display the bodies of *putti* and *seraphim*, which he developed into even more subtle cloud modulations in the *Sistine Madonna* (fig. 19).¹⁷⁶ Thus the ability of the image to instruct moved beyond the narrative level and entered into theological grounding, which necessitated a conceptual approach related to the theology of the formation of angels.

Valeriano's representation of the transformation from celestial being into figural angel not only reflected Aquinas's explanation for the visibility of angels but also demonstrates the negotiation between theology and artistic theory. Giovanni Andrea Gilio argued against painting figures in a deliberately difficult way that distorted narrative clarity to emphasize the painter's virtuosity. He used the angels in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (fig. 26) as an example, arguing that heavenly figures without wings could be demons, rather than angels, and that their movement was mindless.¹⁷⁷ Michael Cole pointed out that Gilio's use of the term *sforzo* in his criticism implied that Gilio had read Paolo Pino's *Dialogo di Pittura*, published in 1548, which stated that artists should incorporate a difficult and mysterious figure into their composition.¹⁷⁸ Valeriano, however, visually separated the angels that do not have wings by painting them in monochromatic *sfumatura*, recessing them into the background, and further distanced them psychologically by dislocating their actions from the primary narrative scene, the Virgin's Assumption. Thus visually distant, they conformed theologically to the way angels were believed to condense from clouds, and he could present wingless figures that perhaps imitated both Michelangelo's style in the Sistine Chapel as well as Raphael's style in the *Stanza della Segnatura*. In this way, he reconciled theology and artistic criticism, with the result of producing a composition that allowed for meditative reflection by Christian intellectuals and art connoisseurs.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷⁷ Gilio, 46, 111.

¹⁷⁸ Cole, *Discernment*, 155-6.

Indeed, the reconciliation of pictorial and philosophical forms in Valeriano's panels relate to contemporary ideas about imitating master painters. David Summers has pointed out that during the High Renaissance, painters sought to create the most effective compositions by combining the best parts of nature. This was based on Greek stories of Zeuxis, who used the most beautiful parts of different models in order to paint an image of Helen, whose beauty surpassed that of even the gods.¹⁷⁹ Robert Williams drew a comparison of artistic selection with debates about the process of Latin prose composition. Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola wrote a letter to Pietro Bembo, stating that style can best be developed by borrowing stylistic elements from whichever model seemed appropriate, thereby mixing styles in order to obtain a truly individual style. Bembo, on the other hand, responded that a writer must study individual Latin authors before he can begin to aspire to an ideal and personalized compositional style.¹⁸⁰ Given Valeriano's use of mixtures—archaic forms and High Renaissance masters—he seems to have followed the theory of imitation that used the most successful forms of various models, but he also took time to study individual works in detail. In so doing, he necessarily judged individual elements and converted them as he thought necessary to conform more wholly to theologically accurate readings.

Indeed, it is relevant to take a moment and explore Valeriano's background to understand his particular process of imitation. Before Valeriano arrived in Rome in 1562 to paint a chapel at Santo Spirito in Sassia, he had trained in Aquila with Pompeo Cesura of the school of Raphael.¹⁸¹ Once in Rome, he was influenced by Michelangelo's and Daniele da Volterra's painting.¹⁸² As I mentioned in chapter one, Baglione commented on Valeriano's coloring during

¹⁷⁹ David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 186.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75-80.

¹⁸¹ Pietro Pirri, *Giuseppe Valeriano S.I., architetto e pittore, 1542-1596* (Rome, 1970), p. 1.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 2-4.

this time, comparing it explicitly to Sebastiano del Piombo's manner. While Valeriano's interest in Northern Italian color techniques continued throughout his career, the *Ascension of Christ* (fig. 27) in Santo Spirito in Sassia demonstrates a much darker palette than characteristic of the panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*. The fresco also shows a Michelangesque interest in musculature, particularly in the figure in the lower left foreground, but the pose of this figure as well as the figure of Christ were taken from Raphael's *Transfiguration* (fig. 28). Indeed, Baglione later mentioned that Valeriano had to modernize his style,¹⁸³ and while he did not explain what this entailed, we can assume from a comparison between his *Ascension of Christ* and the panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* that it included a general lightening of the palette and a limitation of the number of figures that compose the narrative scene. While on one hand this related to a stylistic mixture that Gilio had described, on the other it also shows that early in Valeriano's artistic career, he conscientiously chose stylistic expressions from past Renaissance masters, most notably from Raphael and Michelangelo.

Moreover, between the two projects in Rome that Baglione discussed, Valeriano was occupied primarily with copies of Lucan icons and architectural plans. Before he left for Spain in 1573, he painted a *Holy Family with Saint John* (fig. 29). The devotional composition is set against a dark background and depicts the figures close to the picture plane. The mix of naturalism—a squirming Christ child and the transparency of the Virgin's veil—are juxtaposed with the iconic gestures of John the Baptist and the Virgin. The gesture of the Virgin corresponds to the iconic format known as the *hodegetria* type; she folds her arm to her chest with an upturned palm, similar to the Madonna at Santa Francesca Romana (formerly known as Santa Maria Nova) (fig. 30). Belting wrote that the original *Hodegetria* was believed to have

¹⁸³ Giovanni Baglione, "Vita del Padre Giuseppe Valeriano, Pittore," in *Le Vite de' Pittori Scultori et Architetti ed Intagliatori: Dal Pontificato di Gregorio XIII* (Rome, 1654), 79.

originated in Greece and to have been painted by Saint Luke.¹⁸⁴ Valeriano's *Holy Family with Saint John* does not depict an exact copy of the *hodegetria*, but he fashioned the pose of the Virgin after the icon at Santa Francesca Romana, who unusually holds the Christ child in her right arm. Documents indicate that after Valeriano went to the Iberian Peninsula, he also painted the Lucan icon from Santa Maria Maggiore (fig. 31), first at Palencia in 1573 or 1574 and then at Seville, Granada and Marchena in 1578.¹⁸⁵ The date of Valeriano's copy of the icon at Santa Maria Maggiore (fig. 32) is unknown, but since it is located in Rome, Valeriano probably painted it before his trip to Spain and Portugal or after his return to Rome in 1580. He incorporated a more naturalistic style while preserving the frontality of the Madonna and Child. For example, he softened the folds of the drapery and reduced the dark lines around the eyes. He additionally added gradation to the gold background, which is brighter toward the upper edge of the composition, reflecting light from the Virgin's halo. His interest in both these compositions seems to have been to preserve the essence of the original while making it a more a modern work of art.

Of course, Valeriano's narrative compositions in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* used a variety of archaic types to express the timeless authority of the Church. In chapter one, I showed how these elements were used as a strategy for decorum, a principle that stressed the reading of the composition. The period art critical concept of *aria*, too, related to the expressiveness of a painting. Literally meaning air, in fifteenth-century painting *aria* was associated with blowing drapery that indicated spiritual movement and conditioned a similar emotional response within the viewer.¹⁸⁶ It thus could be a way to present the invisible aspects

¹⁸⁴ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 75.

¹⁸⁵ Pirri, xxxiii-xxxv.

¹⁸⁶ David Summers, "'Aria II': The Union of Image and Artist as an Aesthetic Ideal in Renaissance Art," in *Artibus et Historiae*, 10:20 (1989), 23.

of a narrative, similar to the use of gesture to show emotions within the narrative. It was a certain type of visual beauty, like grace or liveliness, which was determined by style and allowed the painting to impact the viewer's emotions.¹⁸⁷ In Valeriano's *Assumption of the Virgin* (fig. 16), he incorporated a gold ground based on the precedent of icons, but he painted it with gradations that appear as clouds forming concentrically behind the Virgin. The fusion of modern and archaic styles--that is, a narrative history on a gold field—thereby provided the means by which Valeriano could express the Virgin in a beautiful but pure form, which inevitably could characterize his personal style.

By imitating the Lucan icons, Valeriano could learn to adopt their style and incorporate it into his narrative histories while creating modern art. David Summers has explored the theme of *aria* in artistic practice, and he credited Petrarch with originating the term in relation to poetry, which created a certain mood that emanated from the finished work.¹⁸⁸ In painting theory, the relationship between a painter's manner and imitated sources was compared to the resemblance of a portrait to the sitter or the visual relationship like that of father to son. It is not an exact copy, but it retains features of the original that has the potential to bring to mind the memory of the represented. Cennino Cennini had written that a painter could develop his *aria* by copying a master, which would lead inevitably to a personal style that had been derived from study of the master.¹⁸⁹ In Valeriano's case, because of the time he devoted to copying the Lucan icons, one of his master painters was Saint Luke, who according to legend had painted the portrait of the Madonna as she appeared to him in a vision. Vincenzo Danti's *Trattato*, published in 1567, explained the difference between copying and imitating in the painting process. To copy meant to reproduce an exact appearance, but to imitate meant that the painter could retain the essence

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 27.

¹⁸⁸ Summers, *Michelangelo*, 56-7.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

while perfecting the flaws.¹⁹⁰ In this way, Valeriano sought to emulate the miraculous artifacts in order to claim authenticity, but he updated them to the demands for sixteenth-century style. Thus his interest in the icons was not only spiritually motivated but also artistically ambitious because he aligned himself with Saint Luke.

Aria, however, was not only a quality expressed through painting but also a reflection on the personality of the artist. The use of decorum was not a denial of style, but rather it reflected the intention of the artist. By mixing models and considering the reception of his work, Valeriano in one sense denied his subjective identity with the painting. Leonardo, in a similar fashion, wrote about using naturalism to overcome the inevitable insertion of the artist's personality into painting in an attempt to achieve an objective mode of representation.¹⁹¹ Gilio's interlocutors admit that the good painter must be able to discern which elements to use for a painting and which to abandon, and while this is related to the seemingly objective mode of decorum, it points directly to the artist's intellect.¹⁹² Williams has stated the case well, "The problem of imitation is no longer simply that of choosing which authors to imitate, but of determining the principle by which that choice is to be made."¹⁹³ Thus by focusing not only on sixteenth-century masters but also on Lucan icons, Valeriano developed a pure and devout style that demonstrated his personal spirituality.

In Valeriano's case, he followed a moral and ethical approach to creating religious works of art that elevated them to a spiritual beauty above the beauty of the natural world. Cennini wrote about the formation of a personal style as imitation of one or more models, and by recombining them with the imagination, the painter could reproduce his mental image on the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 279.

¹⁹¹ Williams, 75-6.

¹⁹² Gilio, 26.

¹⁹³ Williams, 77.

painting, which thereby manifested physically his personal manner.¹⁹⁴ Alberti also emphasized the imagination in his “idea of beauty,” achieved through fixing images in the artist’s mind through practice.¹⁹⁵ Rather than focusing solely on a naturalistic style, imitation sought the best way to convey the beauty or order of the world through a highly personal, albeit rhetorical, style. Through the conscious work of imitation, similar to the process of training at the Carracci Academy founded in Bologna in 1582, the artist could refine his faculty of judgment and achieve an original composition that was based on a combination of the best elements used by past artists.¹⁹⁶

This is not unlike the pedagogy of the Academy of Saint Luke, which was officially established under Federico Zuccaro in 1593. Every two weeks, the academy held a series of lectures, or *discorsi*, given by academicians and open to students, practicing artists, and art lovers. The lectures were intended to provide a platform for learning the conceptual aspects of design, and they were supplemented by a studio component that was open to students for one hour every afternoon and on feast days.¹⁹⁷ Zuccaro divided the students into four categories, and the progression of levels demonstrates that first a student must learn to copy uncritically (*copiare*). The next level included copying from plaster models and relief sculpture (*ritrarre*), and the third level included copying master painters (*ritrarre*). In the final level, the student would create his own composition (*disegnare*).¹⁹⁸ The *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, published in 1612, defined *disegnare* as an intellectual activity of “ordering” that could represent concepts through lines and marks. *Ritrarre* referred to the act of observing nature and

¹⁹⁴ Summers, *Michelangelo*, 190-1.

¹⁹⁵ Summers, *Michelangelo*, 188-9.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Dempsey, “The Carracci Reform of Art” in *The Age of Correggio and the Carracci: Emilian Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1986), p. 240.

¹⁹⁷ Pietro Roccasacca, “Teaching in the Studio of the ‘Accademia del Disegno dei pittori, scultori e architetti di Roma’ (1594-1636)” in Lukehart, Peter M., ed. *The Accademia Seminars: The Accademia di San Luca I Rome, c. 1590-1635* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 125.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

then describing or demonstrating it, but not necessarily by lines and marks. Both *disegnare* and *ritrarre* had an intellectual dimension, which differentiated it from the purely mechanical process, *copiare*.¹⁹⁹ The Academy of Saint Luke in this period thus did not focus on life drawing or ‘naturalism’ in the sense we think of today, and rather it emphasized learning from past works of art in order to eventually surpass them.

Valeriano served, moreover, as an authority on architectural plans for the Jesuit order and the creator of compositions that were completed by other painters. When he worked for the Jesuits as a superintendent and inspector for architectural projects in Spain and Portugal, documents note that he identified errors in architectural drawings, and hence in their design.²⁰⁰ He continued his supervisory role for the order’s architecture, and under the generalate of Eduardo Mercurian in 1580, he was asked to write a treatise on architecture that would include plans. Although his treatise is lost, he sent a circular to the father provincial of Spain in which he described the “form that we judge our buildings should commonly have.”²⁰¹ He also made painting designs that were then completed by other artists, for example, the *Crucifixion* and *Cavalry* compositions by Gaspare Celio in the Passion Chapel at Il Gesù. Celio also finished illustrations for Juan Battista Villalpando’s book on the Temple of Jerusalem that were begun by Valeriano.²⁰² This demonstrates that he had achieved a status as a designer that would later become the highest rank at Zuccaro’s academy, and his position as a supervisor for Jesuit projects shows period recognition for his mastery of design and judgment.

Design, however, was not only an intellectual activity that culminated in the visual ordering of a concept, but also a spiritual activity. When Lomazzo discussed *euritmia*, his term

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 128.

²⁰⁰ Pirri, 29-30.

²⁰¹ Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), 195.

²⁰² Baglione, 262.

for design, he used it in connection with a spiritual beauty found in matter. He related it to mathematical proportion and hence music, but proportion itself was only the means through which beauty could manifest itself visually. As the foundation of his temple of painting, design metaphorically held up everything else in the composition.²⁰³ Zuccaro's design, in addition, had been based on Christian and ancient ideas of *Logos*, and while *Logos* was concerned with ordering words and discourse to signify the reason of the divine mind, design was concerned about visual style in order to signify the prototype.²⁰⁴ Both modes intended to re-present the spiritual order of the cosmos and gave a new sense of magnitude to the painter's task.

In conclusion, despite period suspicions about the authenticity of sight, a process of active judgment could restore its credibility. This was not all that different from well established devotional traditions that privileged individual discernment of received images. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* acknowledged period concerns about the manipulation of the sense of sight, which could be overcome through personal reflection and judgment. In a similar way, the artist had the responsibility to judge received images and recombine them in order to create a composition that was both interesting and theologically accurate. In Valeriano's case, this resulted in imitation of both sixteenth-century masters and Lucan icons. By updating Lucan icons but retaining their recognizable form, Valeriano could develop an *aria* that was visibly bound to both spirituality and Church doctrine. However, far from completely archaizing his paintings, Valeriano incorporated sixteenth-century styles like smoother drapery and more naturalistic faces. In addition, he inserted iconic forms into devotional compositions like the *Holy Family with Saint John*. This established the old paintings as the base on which to build a composition, like the concept of design, which functioned to order compositional elements.

²⁰³ Williams, p. 127.

²⁰⁴ Charles Dempsey, "Disegno and Logos, Paragone and Academy" in Lukehart, Peter M., ed. *The Accademia Seminars: The Accademia di San Luca I Rome, c. 1590-1635* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 45.

Design itself had achieved an intellectual status, and by the time the Academy of St. Luke was established, the conceptual aspects of ordering played a role in its basic pedagogy. Through copying and imitation, a painter could then learn design, and while on one hand this suppressed subjectivity, the faculty of individual judgment remained a guiding principle.

Conclusion

In short, the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* is not simply a visual articulation of the rulings from the Council of Trent or the aims of the Jesuit order. These components of course played a role in Valeriano's thinking, but to see his works as simply based on authority and dogmatism is to short-change the apparent artistic ambitions of artists during the period and the possibility of subjective response to their works of art. By focusing on recent scholarship that sheds light on the period's artistic trends and ideas about authentic vision experience, I have demonstrated ways in which Valeriano employed style to fulfill his personal responsibility to move viewers' souls closer to God. Perhaps surprisingly, this privileges the visual to act on the viewer and shows that art of the period was not as simplistic or didactic as the historiography suggests.

The chapel should be read not as the antithesis to High Renaissance ideals of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which sets up an unnecessary rupture in the history of art, but rather as the continuation of themes that transformed the visual in the wake of emerging art criticism and religious reform. By exploring the preserved Madonna and Child fresco on the altar, we can see a preoccupation with an archaizing style in devotional art of the fifteenth century that over time found its way into narrative painting. Archaizing qualities in Raphael, Bellini, and Michelangelo's iconography, for instance, have been explored by David Rosand, Alexander Nagel, and Marcia Hall.²⁰⁵ Valeriano's panels, however, took the tendency further not only to use traditional iconography but also to incorporate a retrospective style of painting that privileged older expressions of light, color and space. These archaic stylistic elements are

²⁰⁵ For Michelangelo's archaism, see Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge, 2000); for Raphael's archaism, see Stuart Lingo and David Rosand; and for Bellini, see Marcia Hall, *After Raphael* (Cambridge, 1999).

not unlike the trends acknowledged by Stuart Lingo in the paintings of the Chapel of St. Francis in the Gesù (now the Chapel of the Sacred Heart), and reflect not only the Jesuit acceptance of a rival order, the Capuchins, but also a visual current of the 1580s that privileged older forms of expression.²⁰⁶ The extent to which archaism permeated the visual in Post-Tridentine Rome is a history that continues to be written, and the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* can be firmly located within this inquiry.

By reading Valeriano's use of archaism as a rhetorical strategy for visual painting, we can better understand the degree to which Post-Tridentine style sought a legible and devotionally moving reception. Rather than tying the image to text, the style functioned visually as a manifestation of religious experience, psychologically conveying the temporal distance of the sacred narratives and the potentiality of divine revelation in the present. Visionary experience, as the pinnacle of Christian spirituality, had found a special place on the Iberian Peninsula that Valeriano undoubtedly recognized on his trip to Spain and Portugal in the 1570s. While Victor Stoichita has recognized the influence that this particular religious sentiment had on Spanish painting of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its subsequent influence on Italian painters has not yet been adequately pursued.²⁰⁷ I have reoriented interpretation about Valeriano's style to show that his intention was indeed influenced by both Spanish mysticism and Italian theories of imagination, and his incorporation of traditional visual forms attempted to cultivate a more spiritual experience for the viewer.

Period art critics and theorists, moreover, demonstrate that Post-Tridentine artistic theory was interwoven with other disciplines like rhetoric, music and moral philosophy. These connections support Robert Williams' argument that visual art of the period functioned as the

²⁰⁶ Stuart Lingo, "The Capuchins and the Art of History: Retrospection and Reform in the Arts in Late Renaissance Italy" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998), 143-244.

²⁰⁷ Victor Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995).

superintendency of all forms of knowledge.²⁰⁸ The visual was, according to Williams, considered by late Renaissance theorists to be a mode of knowledge that was the most informed of all the arts. He argued that this period yields evidence of interests in the aesthetic capacity of the visual and pointed out the new concern that period theorists placed on reception; both are elements that led to theories of an absolute art.²⁰⁹ Valeriano's work is situated amid the production of theories that eventually contributed to the "idea" of art, but they had not yet been fully codified as they would be in the seventeenth century. Thus his panels in the chapel of the *Madonna della Strada* exhibit qualities that suggest the transcendent capacity of painting in religious terms, which would later become more secularized in the art academies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This thesis, of course, only attempts to provide a single case study of art of the Roman Post-Tridentine period, and while the implications of artistic theory and religious notions of response to the visual are quite telling, a much larger study could be conducted to test the boundaries of my conclusions and observations. Many more questions can be asked about other leading painters of the period such as Scipione Pulzone, Gaspare Celio and Girolamo Muziano. Pulzone and Celio, for instance, collaborated with Valeriano in work at the Gesù and on other projects, and they warrant further exploration. This generation of artists has traditionally been undervalued, but I hope to have shown that art of the period was not regressive or insignificant, but rather it demonstrates the new responsibility of the artist and elevated the painter's status to new heights.

²⁰⁸ Robert Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

Illustrations



Figure 1: *Madonna and Child*, fresco, 15th c., chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Il Gesù, Rome.



Figure 2: Antoniazio Romano, *Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist*, oil on panel, 1460-80, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.



Figure 3: Icon in Santa Maria del Popolo, tempera on panel, ca. 1300, Rome.



Figure 4: Melozzo da Forlì, Virgin and Child, tempera on canvas, copy of icon at Santa Maria del Popolo, ca. 1470, Museo Civico, Montefalco.



Figure 5: *Madonna and Child*, 15th c. fresco with later over-painting, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Il Gesù, Rome.



Figure 6: Peter Paul Rubens, altarpiece for the *Madonna della Vallicella*, oil, 1608, Chiesa Nuova, Rome.



Figure 7: Gaspare Celio and Giuseppe Valeriano, *Crucifixion*, oil on canvas 1589-90, Passion Chapel, Il Gesù, Rome.



Figure 8: Gerard David, *Christ Nailed to the Cross*, oil on oak, c. 1480, National Gallery, London.



Figure 9: Federico Barocci, *Visitation*, oil on panel, 1584-86, Cappella Pozzomiglio, Chiesa Nuova, Rome.



Figure 10: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Visitation*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.



Figure 11: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Betrothal of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.



Figure 12: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Birth of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.



Figure 13: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Presentation of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.



Figure 14: *Patrician John Before Pope Liberius*, mosaic, 1294-1308, façade of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

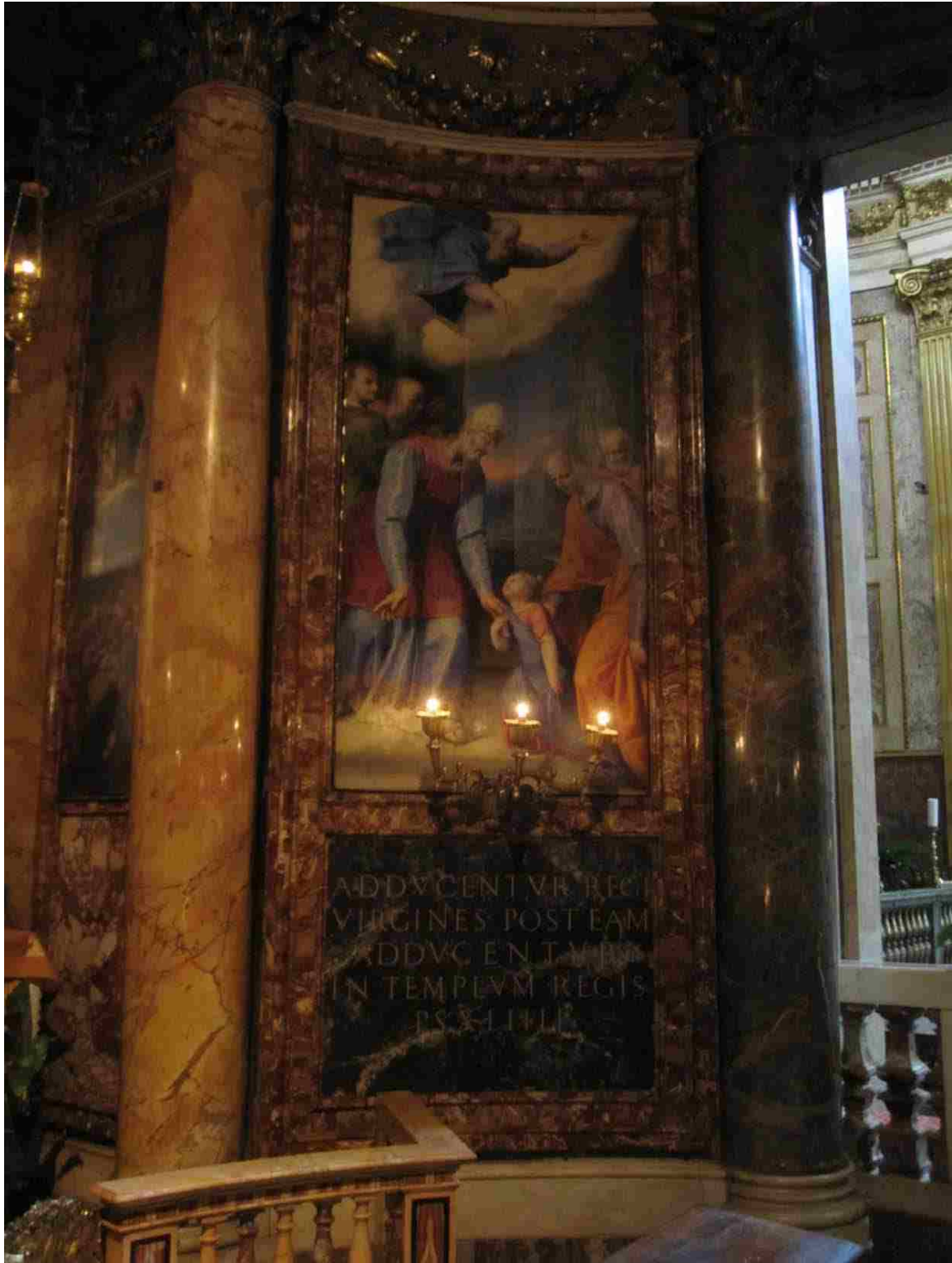


Figure 15: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Presentation of the Virgin*, oil on panel, also showing marble architecture and caption, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.



Figure 16: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Assumption of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.

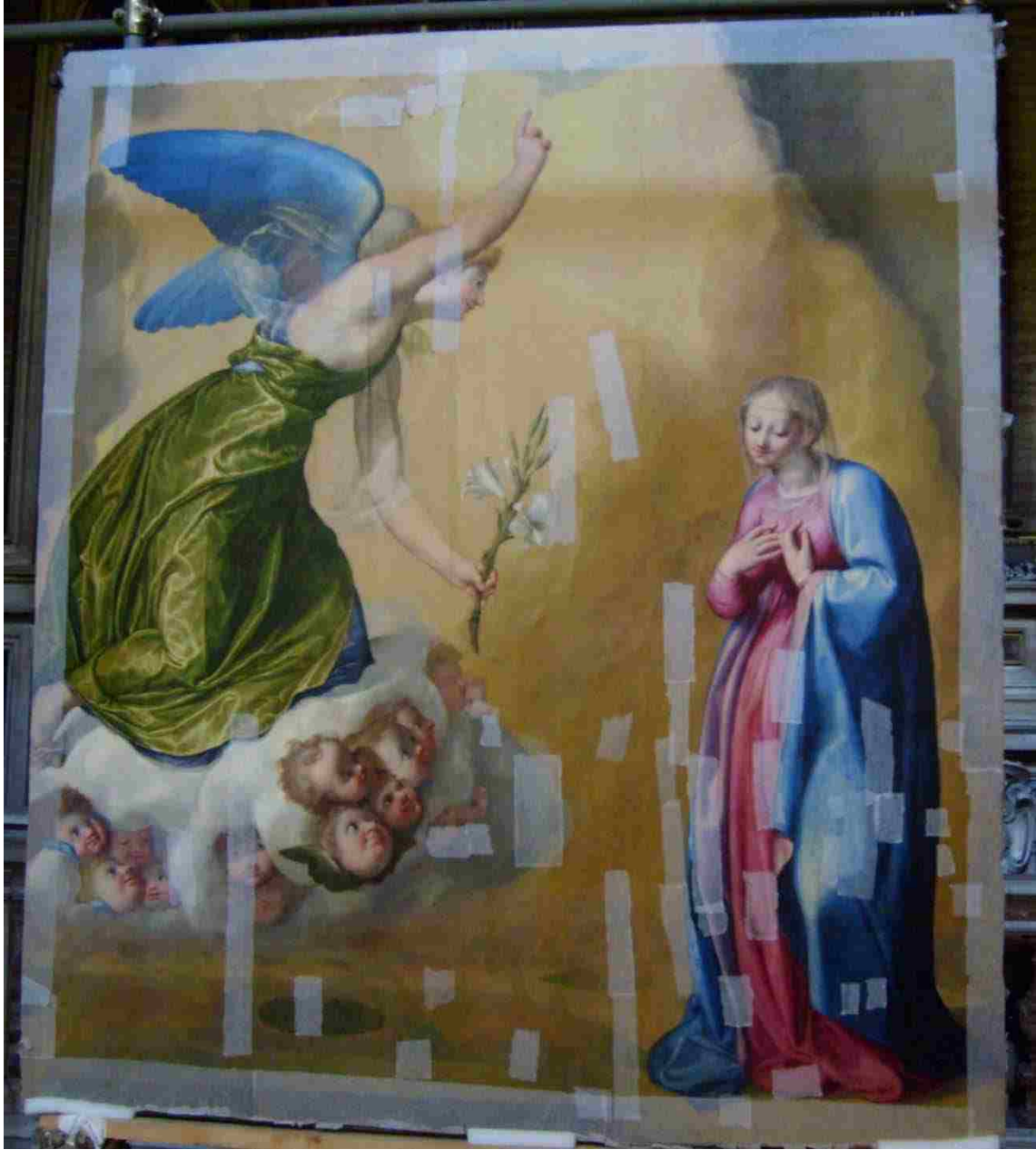


Figure 17: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Annunciation of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome. The painting is currently undergoing restoration.



Figure 18: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Madonna in the Presence of God*, oil on panel, 1586-9, chapel of the *Madonna della Strada*, Gesù, Rome.



Figure 19: Raphael, *Sistine Madonna*, oil on canvas, 1512-13, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, Germany.



Figure 20: Hans Memling, *Shrine of St. Ursula*, painted and gilded oak, 1489, Memlingmuseum, Bruges, Belgium.

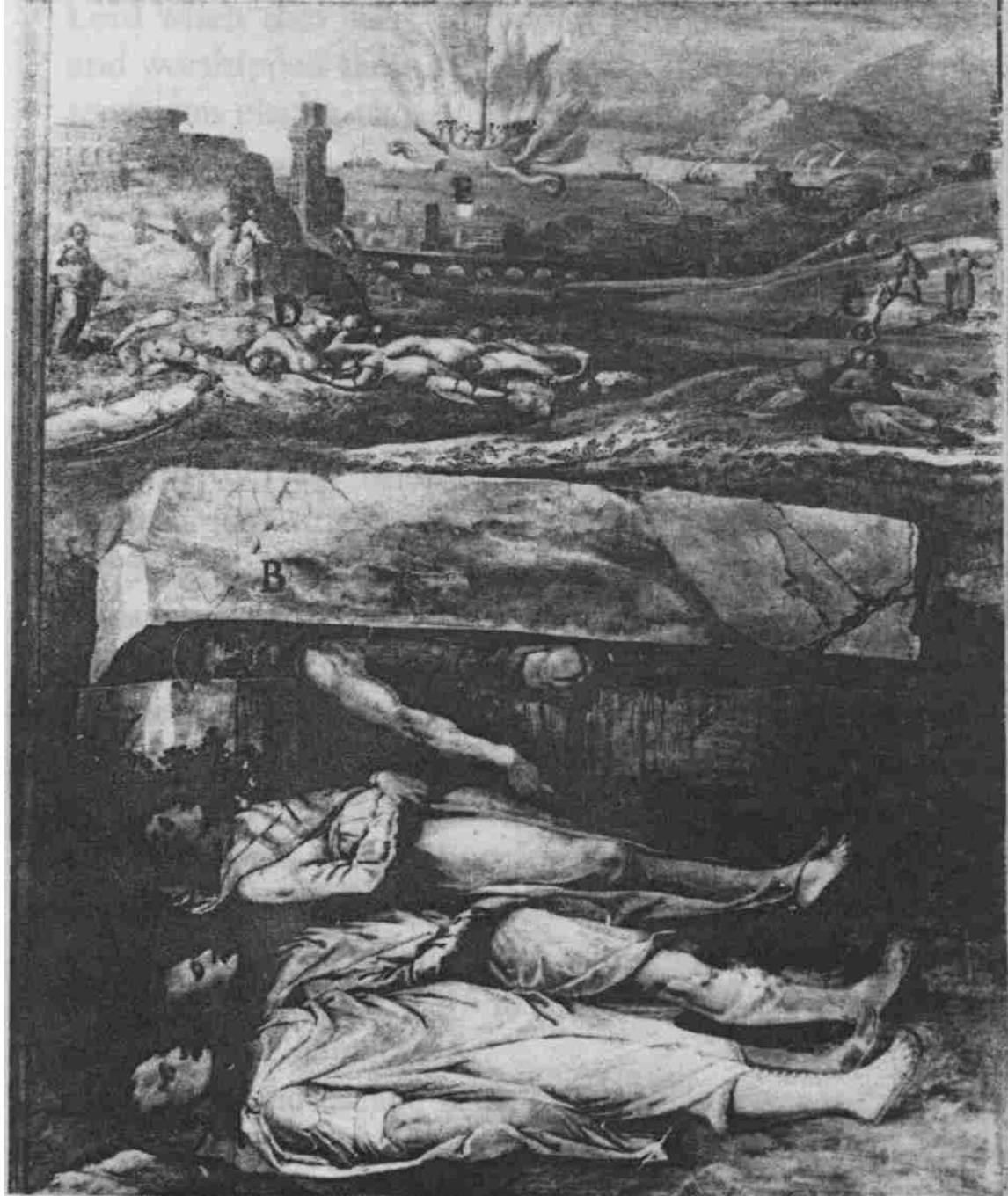


Figure 21: Niccolò Circignani, *Martyrdom of St. John, St. Paul, St. Bibiana, and St. Artermius*, fresco, 1582, San Stefano Rotondo, Rome.



Figure 22: Master of Mary of Burgundy, *Mary of Burgundy at her Devotions*, from the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, before 1482, Austrian National Library, Vienna.



Figure 23: Benedetto Coda, *Madonna Enthroned with Child and Saints*, 1513, Pinacoteca, Rimini.



Figure 24: Raphael, *Saint Cecilia*, oil on canvas, 1515. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.

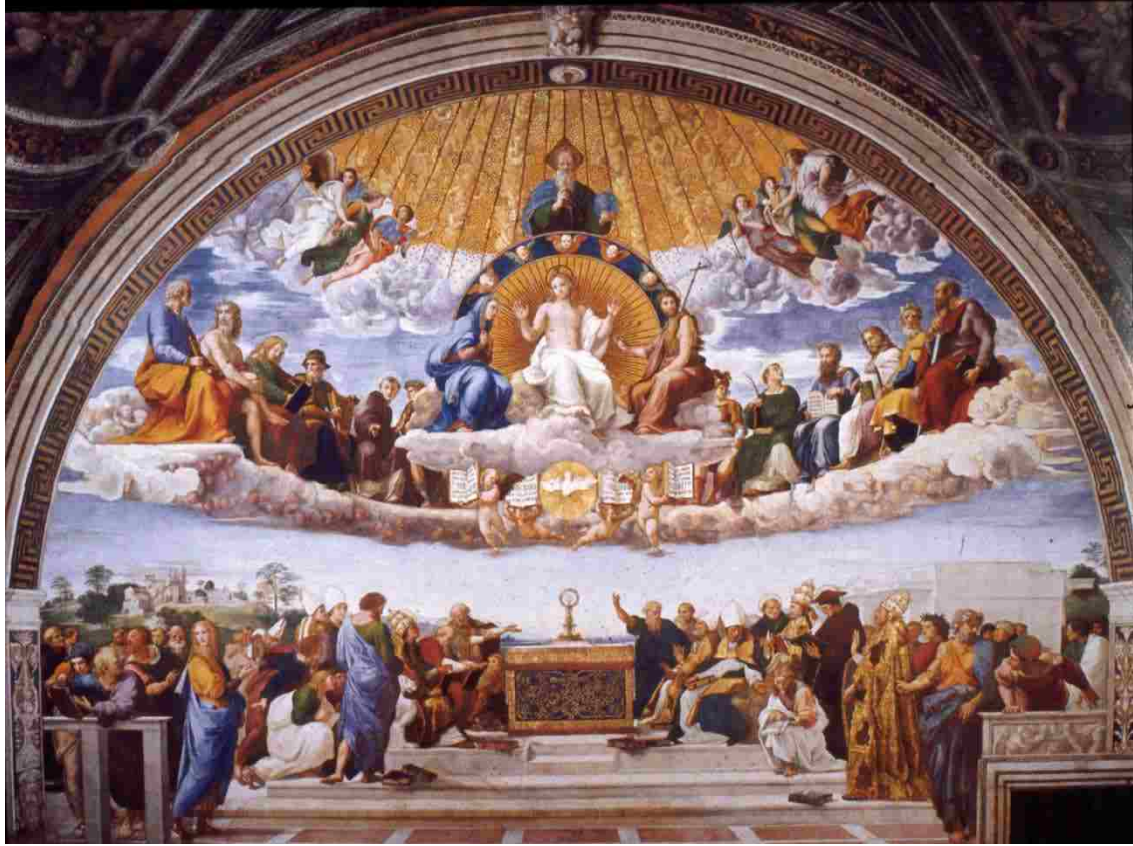


Figure 25: Raphael, *Disputa*, fresco, 1509, Vatican, Stanza della Segnatura, Rome.

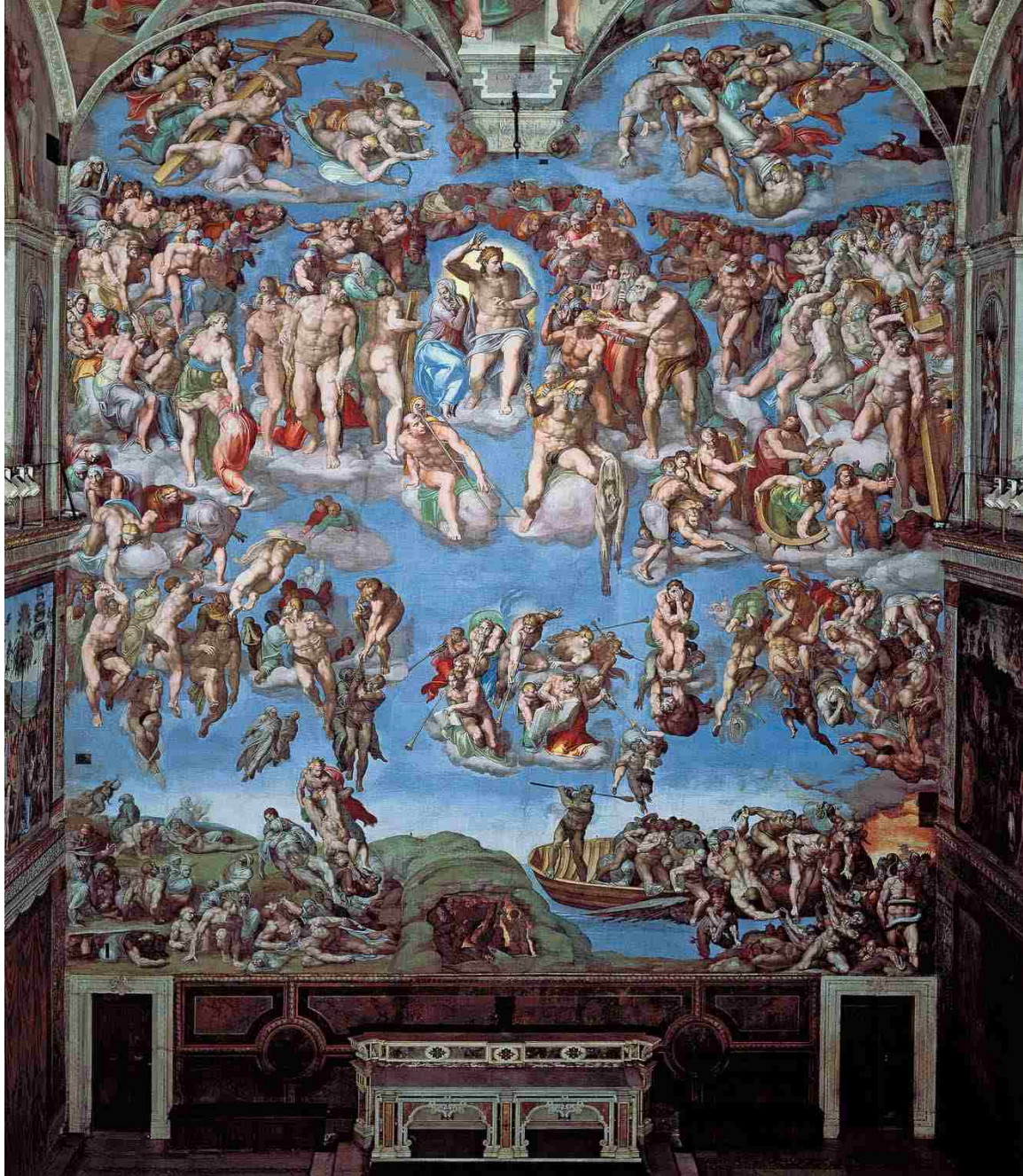


Figure 26: Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, fresco, unveiled 1541, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.



Figure 27: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Ascension of Christ*, fresco, begun 1562, S. Spirito in Sassia, Rome.



Figure 28: Raphael, *Transfiguration*, oil on wood, 1518-20, Vatican Museums, Vatican, Rome.



Figure 29: Giuseppe Valeriano, *Holy Family with Saint John*, before 1573, Galleria Spada, Rome.



Figure 30: *Virgin and Child (Hodegetria)*, 5th or 6th c., S. Maria Nova, Rome.



Figure 31: *Salus populi romani*, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome.



Figure 32: Attributed to Giuseppe Valeriano, *Salus Populi Romani*, 16th c., Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome.

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