

**DOMENICHINO'S *SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF ST. CECILIA*: ARTISTIC
INTERPRETATION AND THE COUNTER-REFORMATION**

by

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INTERPRETATION AND THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	v
Introduction	1
St. Cecilia and the Revival of Her Cult.....	4
St. Cecilia in Art and Literature	13
Early Life and the Carracci Academy.....	22
Conclusion	43
Images	45
Bibliography	64
Vita.....	70
Abstract.....	71

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Stefano Maderno, <i>St. Cecilia</i> , Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome, 1600.....	45
Figure 2. Raphael Sanzio, called Raphael, <i>St. Cecilia</i> , Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, 1516.....	46
Figure 3. Ludovico Carracci, <i>Martyrdom of St. Cecilia</i> , Windsor Castle, UK, 1595-1600.....	47
Figure 4. Ludovico Carracci, Study for <i>St. Cecilia</i> , Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome, 1603.....	48
Figure 5. Guido Reni, copy after Raphael's <i>St. Cecilia</i> , San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1598.....	49
Figure 6. Guido Reni, <i>Coronations of Sts. Cecilia and Valerian</i> , Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome, 1601.....	50
Figure 7. Guido Reni, <i>St. Cecilia</i> , Private Collection, New York, 1606.....	51
Figure 8. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, called Guercino, <i>St. Cecilia</i> , Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 1646.....	52
Figure 9. Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino, <i>Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel</i> , San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615.....	53
Figure 10. Domenichino, <i>St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor</i> , San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615.....	54
Figure 11. Annibale Carracci, <i>The Almsgiving of St. Roch</i> , Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany, 1590-1595.....	55
Figure 12. Domenichino, Study of a beggar for <i>The Almsgiving of St. Cecilia</i> , Windsor Castle, UK, 1612-1615.....	56
Figure 13. Domenichino, Study for <i>The Almsgiving of St. Cecilia</i> , Windsor Castle, UK, 1612-1615.....	57
Figure 14. Domenichino, <i>The Condemnation of St. Cecilia</i> , San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615.....	58

Figure 15. Raphael, <i>Sacrifice at Lystra</i> , Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.....	59
Figure 16. Domenichino, <i>Martyrdom of St. Cecilia</i> , San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615.....	60
Figure 17. Domenichino, Study for the <i>Martyrdom of St. Cecilia</i> , Windsor Castle, UK, 1612-1615.....	61
Figure 18. Domenichino, <i>The Glorification of St. Cecilia</i> , San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615.....	62
Figure 19. Raphael, <i>Vision of Ezekiel</i> , 1518.....	63

Introduction

In an age when artistic success is determined by the attention an artist receives in the media while still young, it may come as a surprise that Domenico Zampieri's name did not appear in print until he was forty-five.¹ Though Zampieri, called Domenichino, has been the subject of numerous scholarly works, few have provided an in depth examination of the factors that resulted in Domenichino's *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia* changing the trajectory of his career. Executed between 1612 and 1615 for the Polet Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi, the French national church in Rome, this fresco cycle propelled Domenichino from his status as a little known Bolognese artist to new heights as one of the most celebrated painters of his generation. Giuseppe Passeri, a painter and writer who lived from 1654-1714, echoed the sentiments of many who saw this work, when he deemed the frescoes "worthy of great praise" and maintained that because of this project Domenichino acquired an excellent reputation.²

Domenichino was hardly the only seventeenth-century artist who dealt with St. Cecilia, an early Christian martyr and saint, as a subject for his works. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries her cult experienced a revival, due to the rediscovery of her relics in Rome, and resulted in numerous artworks featuring her. Many of Domenichino's contemporaries and immediate predecessors depicted her, yet Domenichino's fresco cycle stands out from the creation of other artists working in the same period. Artists typically portrayed Cecilia in the company of other religious figures, or, if she was depicted alone, she was accompanied by a violin or organ, her

¹ Richard E. Spear, *Domenichino* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 179.

saintly attributes. Due to the large scale of his commission for the Polet Chapel, Domenichino was able to expand upon conventional depictions of St. Cecilia. The frescoes, which feature *St. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by Angels*, *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor*, *The Condemnation of St. Cecilia*, *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* and *St. Cecilia in Glory*, effectively highlight the acts of her life that led to her canonization. Domenichino's ability to anchor Cecilia in the "real world" by depicting scenes from her life resulted in a series of refined and deeply moving religious images. This thesis will argue that Domenichino's inventive interpretation of St. Cecilia's hagiography for the Polet Chapel propelled Domenichino into the upper echelons of seventeenth-century artists. To support this argument, this paper will examine three main factors that contributed to the commission, the execution and the success of the *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*.

Chapter 1 provides pertinent social and historical information outlining the revival of St. Cecilia's cult. Primarily, this chapter will demonstrate that the cult of St. Cecilia dove-tailed with the Council of Trent's reform measures for the Catholic Church in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. By reviving her cult, the Church reaffirmed the traditional Catholic values that St. Cecilia represented to the faithful as well as to those who posed a threat to the Church.

Chapter 2 will analyze the treatment of St. Cecilia in art by Domenichino's contemporaries and his immediate predecessors. This chapter will focus, in particular, on the strong Cecilian tradition found in Bologna and amongst the Bolognese artists. This examination illuminates possible influences on Domenichino as well as demonstrating that his fresco cycle departed from conventional depictions.

Finally, Chapter 3 examines the individual frescoes in *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*, as well as the purposes this artwork served. France had particularly strong associations with St. Cecilia, and it seems fitting that she be represented prominently on the walls of the French national church in Rome. In addition, France itself was experiencing division within its own country, due to the Protestant Reformation. By commissioning Domenichino to create a large scale depiction of the life of St. Cecilia, the French cardinal Pierre Polet reaffirmed France's strong ties to the Catholic Church. The chapter also includes an in-depth analysis of the inventive style and iconography found in the Polet Chapel's fresco cycle. Building on the information provided in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 demonstrates that although Domenichino did borrow from other artists' repertoires, he was able to imbue each of the five frescoes in this cycle with his own inventive flair, showcasing his own artistry.

In summation, this thesis will argue that the *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia* had a crucial impact on Domenichino's artistic legacy, and will demonstrate how his innovative interpretation of her hagiography added new themes to the canon of work featuring St. Cecilia.

St. Cecilia and the Revival of Her Cult

St. Cecilia, an early Christian saint, often glorified in the fine arts, poetry and music, is one of the most venerated martyrs of Christian antiquity. A paragon of virtue and charity, Cecilia has been a model for Christian values and has been since the fourth century. Textual references found in the fifth-century Acts of the Martyrdom of St. Cecilia and the sixth-century Martyrologium Heironymianum provide evidence that Cecilia's cult enjoyed immense popularity during the early Christian era.³ Her image appears in numerous Roman wall paintings from the fourth and fifth centuries, and her figure is included twice in the mosaics at Ravenna.⁴ Her popularity declined in the Middle Ages, when Cecilia came to be viewed as simply another virgin martyr, while popular piety promoted the protection and security from more charismatic figures. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, St. Cecilia's popularity experienced a revival, inspiring numerous artworks.

Very little is known about the historical Cecilia, but her burial amongst the early popes clearly indicates that she played an integral part in pre-Christian Rome. Textual evidence found in The Acts of the Martyrs suggests that Cecilia lived in the early first or second century A.D., yet discrepancies within the text, primarily names of local rulers and the early popes, makes it hard to confirm an exact date. While details such as her dates of birth and death remain dubious, details surrounding her legend are far more concrete. She was born into a wealthy Roman family and raised a Christian, during a time of Christian persecutions in the Roman Empire.⁵ The Acts, the earliest known

³Richard Luckett, "St. Cecilia and Music," Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association 99 (1972-1973): 18.

⁴ Mercedes Rochelle, Post-Biblical Saints Art Index (London: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1994), 62.

⁵ Thomas Bokenkotter, A Concise History of the Catholic Church (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 37.

hagiography to mention Cecilia, states that she was never without her copy of the Gospels, she prayed incessantly and she implored the Lord to protect her virginity. Unfortunately, her visions of living in a perpetual state of virginity were jeopardized when she was betrothed to Valerian, a wealthy Roman pagan. On their wedding night, Cecilia told Valerian

O sweetest and most loving young man. I have a secret to confess to you...I have a lover, an angel of God, who watches over my body with zeal...if my angel senses that you are touching me with lust he will strike you...if on the other hand he knows that you love me with sincere love he will love you and show you his glory.⁶

According to The Golden Legend, upon hearing these words Valerian “was troubled.”⁷

Cecilia was able to persuade Valerian to find Pope Urban, who had sought refuge from the persecutions in the catacombs, and speak to him about Christ and his teachings.

Valerian and his brother Tiburtius both converted to Christianity, and Valerian agreed to live his life in chastity with his wife.⁸ Valerian and Tiburtius devoted a great deal of their time preparing proper Christian burials for those martyred in the faith. Because this was against Roman law, Almachius, the prefect of Rome, ordered their arrest and execution.⁹

After Valerian’s death, Almachius sought to gain control of his immense wealth and possessions. But Cecilia, having heard of her husband’s execution, distributed the family’s riches to the poor. She was thereupon arraigned and discovered to be a Christian.

Cecilia refused to recant by sacrificing to the gods, stating “I don’t know where you lost your eyes! What you call gods are nothing but lumps of stone, as we all see. Put

⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 319.

⁷ Ibid., 320.

⁸ Ida Magli, Women and Self Sacrifice in the Christian Church (London: McFarland and Company, Inc, 2001), 55.

⁹ Voragine, Golden Legend, 321.

your hand out and touch them, and you will know with your fingers what you can't see with your eyes.”¹⁰ Furious at Cecilia's impertinence, Almachius ordered she be taken back to her house and burned in a boiling bath. Her hagiographers report that she lay in the bath “as in a cool place, without feeling as much as a drop of perspiration.”¹¹ Upon hearing this, Almachius commanded that she be beheaded. The headsman struck her three times in the neck but could not succeed in his task. She lived for three days, before she died on November 22, her feast day. Pope Urban, who reigned from 222-230, buried her body “where bishops were buried, and consecrated her house,” making it a pilgrimage site for the faithful.¹²

An account of St. Cecilia found in the Martyrologium Hieronymianum indicates that her feast was celebrated in the Catholic Church as early as the fourth century. A church in Rome, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, was built in her honor around the same time. Cecilia's cult evidently continued to enjoy popularity well into the ninth century, when St. Cecilia appeared to Pope Pascal I in a dream, begging him to find the relics of her body. Pascal eventually found her remains located in an annex of the chapel of the popes, in the catacombs.¹³ Pascal removed them from her burial chamber and ordered her incorrupt body, traditionally a sign of sanctity in the Catholic Church, to be dressed in gold robes and carried to the basilica consecrated to St. Cecilia in Trastevere.¹⁴ After allowing the body to be on display for several days, he asked that she be closed up in a

¹⁰ Ibid., 323.

¹¹ Ibid., 323.

¹² Ibid., 323.

¹³ Ilaria Bignamin ed., Archives and Excavations (Rome: Societa Typografia Romana, 2004), 27.

¹⁴ Magli, Women and Self Sacrifice, 58.

marble sarcophagus. He then ordered an altar to be built above her tomb.¹⁵ There she lay undisturbed for the next seven hundred years.

This all changed when the Protestant Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther, swept through Europe in the sixteenth century. The Roman Catholic Church, recognizing that its authority was endangered, was placed on the defensive. The Church quickly organized a council, which would lay down, with authority, the rules of the Catholic faith and issue authoritative decisions on the dogmatic controversies attacked by the Reformers.¹⁶ Thus, in December 1545, Pope Paul III opened the Council of Trent, which would continue to meet until 1563, charging it to uproot heresy and restore peace within the Church.¹⁷

One point in which Catholicism showed its awareness of the Reformers, arguments was in the veneration of saints.¹⁸ Saints were familiar figures in the daily experience of early modern society. The saints acted as models for the faithful and assumed a prominent place in the social equilibrium of Catholic communities. Protestants viewed the veneration of saints as a kind of spiritual witchcraft, and they argued that to invoke any advocate other than Christ was sacrilegious.¹⁹ The members of the Council of Trent thus were faced with the task of preserving the cult of saints in terms acceptable to the regularizing criteria of Trent.²⁰ To do this the council initiated a

¹⁵ Ludwig Hertling and Englebert Kirschbaum, The Roman Catacombs and Their Martyrs, trans. M. Joseph Costello (The Bruce Publishing Co.: Milwaukee, 1956), 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁷ Martin D. W. Jones, The Counter-Reformation in Religion and Society (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 68.

¹⁸ Gabriella Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline: 1450-1650," in Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 99.

¹⁹ Eugene F. Rice, Jr., St. Jerome (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 196.

²⁰ Simon Ditchfield, Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 120.

number of new criteria for sanctity. In an effort to curb miracle-laden stories of the saints, the church began to place more emphasis on the heroic nature of virtue exercised by the early saints and on the historical veracity of the hagiographies.²¹

Models of early Christian martyrs possessed a particular Tridentine resonance.²² Many of the Catholic faithful drew parallels between their present resistance to Protestantism and their predecessors' resistance to paganism. The early Christians' strong faith in the presence of extreme adversity proved to be inspirational to the devout of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition, the majority of saints canonized in the early modern era were members of religious orders, and as such provided unrealistic models for the average person. Because none of the early saints were members of any religious orders, as none had been established at that point, by promoting them as models the Catholic Church demonstrated a concern to engage the lay person. Between 1588 and 1665, three of the fifteen saints canonized were lay people- quite a departure from the succession of triumphal canonizations and beatifications of mystical women in the previous centuries.²³

Numerous works praising these early Christian martyr figures proliferated throughout Italy, including the 1591 publication Historia delle Sante Vergine Romana con Varie Antione e con Alcuni vite Brevi de Santi Parenti Loro e di Gloriosi Martiri Papia e Mauro Soldati Romanium, written by Oratorian Antonio Gallonio. Gallonio used both textual sources and archaeological information to compile a book specifically on the early Christian martyrs. The Cecilian example of a holy virgin keeping to her vow and

²¹ Ibid., 120.

²² Ibid., 187.

²³ Gabriella Zarri, From Prophecy to Discipline, 100.

martyred for her faith gained fresh currency as an example of Christian virtue. And it was this climate that promoted the revival of Cecilia's cult. A 1594, by Andrea Castelletti, poem on the life of St. Cecilia, and the naming of Palestrina's music school after her in 1584 served to highlight her increasing popularity.

The Council of Trent also saw the need to anchor the cult of saints solidly in an ancient tradition. By doing so, the Catholic Church demonstrated the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition between early persecuted Christian martyrs, such as St. Cecilia, and the Church's present crisis. History served as a polemical tool to refute the Protestant accusations that the beliefs and practices of the Roman Church were corrupt. All that was required was to demonstrate the historical truth that the sixteenth-century Church remained unchanged from the primitive Church, and that the Protestant doctrines were incongruent with the past and that their theoretical claims were doomed to collapse. Papal teaching was now firmly grounded on the criterion of the heroic nature of moral virtues. As result, those who experienced the extraordinary manifestations and charismatic gifts that characterized the mystical model of the Middle Ages were replaced by early Christians whose virtue and quiet inner faith was congruent with Counter-Reformation attitudes.

The Council of Trent reconfirmed the legitimacy of the cult of saints and the veneration of their images and relics, and recognized the need to extirpate abuses and eliminate superstitions.²⁴ The intent was to reduce the number of tales and hagiographic legends printed in books such as The Golden Legend and Domenico Cavalca's Lives of the Holy Fathers, as well as the countless "histories" and "legends" printed on broadsheets and widely sold. Though stories of the lives of the saints had always been

²⁴ Ibid., 100.

popular with the public, these texts no longer fulfilled the new requirement for greater historical accuracy, a requirement that was becoming important in establishing ecclesiastically acknowledged sanctity. To ensure a dissemination of accurate texts, Pope Pius IV invited Paulus Manutius, the son of the great printer Aldus, to move his press from Venice to Rome in 1561. He was asked to serve the Church by printing accurate and scholarly editions of the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers.²⁵

The new emphasis on historical veracity called for closer attention to be paid to a saint's chronology. The Catholic Church also became interested in more accurate information pertaining to the current whereabouts of saints' relics.²⁶ This emphasis on historical veracity had a direct impact on the revival of St. Cecilia's cult. During the restoration of her church in Rome in October 1599, Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato had the high altar examined. Under it, was the sarcophagus, with the relics of the saint that Pope Paschal had interred in the ninth century. The exhumation of her body, discovered miraculously preserved, lying on her right side, covered with a thin silk cloth, her neck partially severed, became a sensation in Rome. Pope Clement VIII ordered her body be placed on display for a month. The re-discovery of this martyred saint reverberated throughout Rome and had an enormous impact on the women of the city.

The Christian archaeologist and Oratorian scholar, Antonio Basso, in his account of the saint's rediscovery, wrote

It was above all the matrons and young girls of the highest Roman nobility, swept up by love of their virgin fellow citizen, who hurried here, lingered and prostrated themselves as supplicant worshippers. They did not get up again until dusk...these vigils were devotedly conducted by the female sex on all days when the body of the saint was shown in public.²⁷

²⁵ Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *St. Jerome*, 154.

²⁶ Ditchfield, *Liturgy*, 119.

²⁷ F. Carrafa and A. Massone ed., *Santa Cecilia Romano: Passione e Culto* (Rome, n.d. 1983), 273.

On St. Cecilia's feast day, November 22, 1599, Pope Clement VIII, forty-two cardinals and the ambassadors of Venice, Savoy and France witnessed her reinterment under the high altar.²⁸

With the support of papal authority, Cardinal Sfondrato assumed the important role in celebrating, propagating and memorializing the discovery. To commemorate the event, the sculptor Stefano Maderno was commissioned to fashion a marble statue, completed in 1600, depicting Cecilia in the position in which she had been found for Santa Cecilia in Trastevere (Figure 1). What followed was a veritable flood of interest in Cecilia. This renewed attention prompted Antonio Bosio's edition of The Acts, an account of Cecilia's life. The Acts became so popular that it was published in Italian and translated into Dutch, French and German.²⁹ The event was also documented by Cardinal Cesare Baronio in his Annales, a highly important text on the Catholic Church published in 1600. In Italy, no less than thirteen plays on the theme of her life were published between 1600 and 1696.³⁰ But perhaps the most notable of all was the sharp increase of artworks featuring her. Between the fifth and sixteenth centuries only a handful of major pieces of art were created depicting Cecilia. In these works, Cecilia was typically in the company of other martyred saints, such as in the mosaics at Sant' Apollinare in Ravenna, or she was depicted in her capacity as the patron saint of music.³¹ Yet, in the seventeenth century, the canon of works featuring Cecilia swelled considerably.³² Between her reinterment in 1599 and the end of the seventeenth century, over thirty-two paintings were

²⁸ Ditchfield, Liturgy, 183.

²⁹ Lockett, St. Cecilia, 27.

³⁰ Ibid., 27.

³¹ Rochelle, Art Index, 62.

³² These include paintings by such artists as Giovanni Francesco Guercino, Domenicho Zampieri, Ludovico Carracci, Sebastiano Filippi, Carlo Saraceni, Lavinia Fontana, Bartolomeo Schedoni, Carlo Sellito, Jacopo Robusti Tintoretto and Francesco Vanni.

produced celebrating this virgin-martyr. No doubt the majority of these works were fueled by the rediscovery of Cecilia's tomb, but the depictions of such an important early Christian figure also served to underscore the Council of Trent's new stipulations concerning true sanctity. Simultaneously functioning as pedagogical text and sacred objects, these images of Cecilia highlight the church's renewed emphasis on humility, faith and charity.

St. Cecilia in Art and Literature

Early Christian paintings depict St. Cecilia as a typical virgin martyr. With no specific saintly attributes, she was distinguished by the corona and the palm of martyrdom.³³ But because other early Christian martyrs like Dorothy and Felicity were accompanied by the same attributes, it was difficult to distinguish Cecilia's image. Although Cecilia was lumped together with other virgin martyrs iconographically, literary works, such as the Martyrologium Heironymianum, The Acts, The Golden Legend and the 1516 publication De Laudibus Sanctae Cecilia took a keen interest in Cecilia's hagiography; as a result, Cecilia's early appeal in the Church was in large measure literary. Because few people had the means to purchase books in the early modern era, Cecilia held little popular appeal for the lay community. Thus, by the early Middle Ages Cecilia was considered to be simply another virgin martyr. This attitude changed in 1516, with Raphael's magnificent altarpiece for the church of San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna. In this work, Raphael established an interesting and new iconographical narrative for St. Cecilia.³⁴ Raphael's model set a standard for the depiction of St. Cecilia and ushered in a strong Cecilian tradition among Bolognese artists.

Raphael's *St. Cecilia*: Patron and Painting

Between the fall of 1513 and 1516, Raphael was commissioned by Elena Duglioli dall'Olio, a patrician of Bologna known for her piety who was later beatified, to execute an altarpiece for her chapel dedicated to St. Cecilia in the church of San Giovanni in

³³ Lockett, St. Cecilia and Music, 8.

³⁴ The altarpiece has been in the Pinacoteca in Bologna since 1815.

Monte (Figure 2).³⁵ Though it would be several decades before St. Cecilia's incorrupt body was rediscovered, the life of the saint held particular resonance for Elena Duglioli dall'Olio, who considered herself a modern day Cecilia. Born in 1472 to a wealthy Bolognese family, Elena was expected to marry well. Unfortunately, the thought of marriage was repugnant to Elena, who had resolved to live a life of virginity.³⁶ Elena found many parallels between her life and St. Cecilia's. The saint was well known in Bologna because at the end of the fifteenth century the Bentivoglio family founded an oratory dedicated to St. Cecilia at the Church of San Giacomo Maggiore and in the next century decorated it with a series of frescoes depicting her life. The cult of St. Cecilia, the endeavor to obtain her relics and the erection of the chapel dedicated to her had a profound impact on Elena's life.³⁷ Against her wishes, her family married her to an elderly relative, who, moved by Elena's devotion and piety, agreed to live in a chaste marriage. As a modern-day Cecilian example of a holy virgin living in chastity, Cecilia and her husband became famous throughout Italy as living examples of continence.³⁸ After receiving a relic of St. Cecilia as a gift from Cardinal Francesco Alidosi, Elena decided to erect a chapel dedicated to the saint.³⁹ Raphael's altarpiece became the crowning achievement of the chapel and later became the repository of Elena's own miraculously uncorrupt body.

St. Cecilia is the central figure of a group comprised of Saints Paul, John and Augustine and Mary Magdalene. Raphael grouped the figures closely together in a

³⁵ R. Stefaniak, "Raphael's *Santa Cecilia*: A Fine and Private Vision of Virginity," *Art History* 14 (1991): 345.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 345.

³⁷ Stanislaw Mossakowski, "*St. Cecilia*: An Iconographical Study," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 31 (1968): 2.

³⁸ Stefaniak, *Raphael's Santa Cecilia*, 348.

³⁹ Nicoletta Baldini, *Raphael* (New York: Rizzoli International Publishers, 2005), 154.

landscape, with musical instruments at their feet. St. Cecilia is dressed in golden garments, symbolizing her desire for God, lifts her face upwards to where the dark, cloudy sky opens above her to reveal a chorus of angels.⁴⁰ The saints surrounding Cecilia do not directly take part in her ecstasy. The privacy of Cecilia's vision and devotion is reinforced by her companions' indifferent behavior, as they neither look nor hear, nor are aware of the object of Cecilia's vision.

The introduction of musical instruments in association with St. Cecilia was completely original. In the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, King David, St. Job and St. Gregory were the patrons of music.⁴¹ Because this altarpiece rapidly achieved fame and became the subject of numerous engravings, Cecilia superseded these earlier patron saints. As the painting gained popularity, Cecilia henceforth came to be regarded as the patron saint of music. According to contemporary sources, Elena was described as having frequent visionary and ecstatic states in which a major aspect was the rapture caused by the celestial music of angels.⁴² This evidently had some influence on the way Raphael presented St. Cecilia's vision. It has also been suggested that the scattered and damaged instruments (the viola has broken strings and a cracked body and one kettledrum is torn) symbolize the secular music of the wedding ceremony initially rejected by Cecilia.⁴³ The presence of this important work by Raphael in Bologna had a profound effect on the artists who followed him. Not only did it establish new pictorial conventions for St. Cecilia, but it also provided Bolognese artists with one of Raphael's works to study and emulate.

⁴⁰ Mossakowski, *An Iconographical Study*, 2.

⁴¹ Lockett, *St. Cecilia and Music*, 18.

⁴² Baldini, *Raphael*, 154.

⁴³ Mossakowski, *An Iconographical Study*, 4.

Ludovico Carracci and His Works Depicting St. Cecilia

The model of painting that Raphael bequeathed to future artists was eagerly picked up by Ludovico, Agostino and Annibale Carracci.⁴⁴ Agostino and Annibale joined with their cousin Ludovico to establish an art Academy in Bologna. With the establishment, in 1582, of the Accademia degli Incamminati the three Carracci fomented an artistic revolution that played a pivotal role in establishing the naturalism and emotional expressiveness of Italian Baroque painting.⁴⁵ Their students included artists such as Guido Reni, Francesco Albani and Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino, who was instructed by Ludovico in his youth. A cornerstone of the Carracci's technique was the revival of High Renaissance principles, best exemplified by Raphael, whose *St. Cecilia* became the canon for Bolognese art.

For some seventeenth-century writers, Ludovico was overshadowed by Annibale, yet Ludovico was also innovative and influential. Carlo Cesare Malvasia, the seventeenth-century biographer of Bolognese artists, touted Ludovico as the

true succor to painting when it was faltering and to save it from immanent harm and ruin. It was he who . . .liberated the profession of art and restored it to its ethical vigor and allowed it to rise to an even more perfect state.⁴⁶

Hallmarks of Ludovico's works were the emotional intensity and inventive interpretation of traditional subjects.⁴⁷ This ability to construct unique interpretations of established narratives can be found in a late drawing of the *Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* (1595-1600)

⁴⁴ Ludovico Carracci (1555-1619); Agostino Carracci (1557-1602); Annibale Carracci (1560-1609)

⁴⁵ Babette Bohn, *Ludovico Carracci and the Art of Drawing* (Turnhout Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2004), 11.

⁴⁶ Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Life of the Carracci*, trans. Anne Summerscale (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 81.

⁴⁷ Bohn, *Ludovico*, 27.

now housed at Windsor Castle (Figure 3).⁴⁸ Measuring 171 x 148 mm and executed in pen and brown ink with brown and gray wash, this drawing presents an innovative way to depict this scene. According to the legend, St. Cecilia was thrown into a bath filled with boiling water, when left unharmed, the executioner was ordered to put her to death with a sword. Instead of privileging one scene over the other, Ludovico collapses the narrative into one single drawing. As Cecilia, wrapped in robes, is being held in the bath by a toga clad man, another similarly attired man is filling a bucket with more water. To the right of this scene, occupying the foreground and middle ground, stand two Roman soldiers wearing togas and plumed helmets, brandishing swords. Ludovico evidently took great care in anchoring the scene in a specific time and place as the costumes and hastily sketched background of Corinthian columns and pagan statues suggests. Denis Mahon suggests that this was a study for a painting in San Maurizio, Mantua that was commissioned from Ludovico in 1619 and executed after his death. From documentary evidence it seems that the Theatine fathers engaged other painters to finish the work.⁴⁹ A picture by Camillo Procaccini in San Nicolo da Tolentino, Venice shows a similar combination of the bath and execution. In spite of iconographical differences, the two representations must be related. But, since neither work can be dated precisely, it remains uncertain as to which work was the prototype.⁵⁰

In 1603, Ludovico executed a small oil painting of St. Cecilia for the Pinacoteca Capitolino in Rome (Figure 4). In this work, Cecilia is depicted in profile, sitting at her organ, which reflected her status as the patron saint of music.⁵¹ Here, as in Raphael's

⁴⁸ R. Wittkower, *The Drawings of the Carracci at Windsor Castle* (New York: Phaidon, 1952), 105.

⁴⁹ Bohn, *Ludovico*, 470.

⁵⁰ Wittkower, *The Drawings*, 105.

⁵¹ Bohn, *Ludovico*, 380.

influential piece, Cecilia abandons her earthly instrument and is enraptured by celestial music. A mysterious opening in the lower right corner is filled with light and slightly obscured. This odd perspective was meant to suggest an alternate dimension as the source of the heavenly music. To underscore the popularity of such scenes, it is worth noting that Ludovico's depiction was informed by Northern prints. Gerrit Pieterz's engravings in particular show Cecilia in profile and seated at an organ. Yet, while Pieterz's organ is embellished with ornate carvings, Ludovico's organ is plain and simple, allowing the humble purity of the setting reflect its occupant. Ludovico was an artist of extraordinary stature, whose drawings and paintings of St. Cecilia perpetuated the saint's deep rooted cult in Bologna.

Guido Reni and his Depictions of St. Cecilia

One of the Carracci's most successful students was Guido Reni (1572-1642) This illustrious Baroque artist's paintings and style made him one of Europe's most popular artists during his own lifetime and for several centuries afterward. Reni and Domenichino both began their artistic training with the mannerist painter Denys Calvaert, before transferring to the Carracci Academy. It is evident that Reni's early success in Rome began with his paintings of St. Cecilia. Though Domenichino and Reni began as friends and ended up as competitors, it is clear that Domenichino greatly admired Reni's artistry, as Reni's paintings clearly influenced his *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*.

The titular cardinal of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere was Paolo Emilio Sfondrato. In 1598, Sfondrato had visited Bologna as part of Pope Gregory XIV's court. It was on this occasion that he became acquainted with Reni and subsequently became Reni's first

Roman patron.⁵² Their relationship most certainly began while Reni was still in Bologna, when he executed a copy of Raphael's *St. Cecilia* for the cardinal (Figure 5). Reni's copy is most likely the painting presently on the altar of the Polet Chapel. Although the painting has deteriorated considerably over the centuries, it was highly praised by Reni's seventeenth-century biographers. In the eyes of his contemporaries, Reni revived the *nobiltà* and *grazia* of the revered Raphael. It was as a consequence of the success of the *St. Cecilia* copy that Reni was invited by Sfondrato to Rome in 1601.⁵³

Upon Reni's arrival in Roma, Sfondrato, who had been inspired to undertake the redecoration of the basilica of Santa Cecilia, commissioned him to paint *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* for the altar of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. This piece clearly looks to Raphael's painting for inspiration. St. Cecilia, robed in a dress similar to Raphael's Cecilia, kneels on the ground, arms outstretched in an *orans* position, as the executioner swings back his sword. St. Cecilia's upward gaze, derived from Raphael's *St. Cecilia*, looks at an opening in the cloudy sky as two putti, carrying a corona and martyrs' palms, begin their descent. This painting was soon followed by the *Coronation of Sts. Cecilia and Valerian*, also executed in 1601 (Figure 6). The *Coronation* depicts Sts. Cecilia and Valerian kneeling on a tiled floor, Cecilia in the *orans* position, facing the viewer and Valerian, arms folded over his chest, in profile. Both saints gaze upward as an angel descends, carrying martyrs' crowns for both of them. Reni makes a brief reference to Cecilia's position as patron saint of music by including the faint outline of an organ in the left background. Both of these images in Santa Cecilia proved to be inspirational to Domenichino, when he painted the same events for the Polet Chapel.

⁵² D. Stephen Pepper, "Guido Reni in Bologna 1595-1601" in Guido Reni Los Angeles County Museum of Art, ed. Susan L. Caroselli (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1988), 151.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 151.

In 1606, Guido Reni painted another *St. Cecilia*⁵⁴ for Cardinal Sfondrato (Figure 7). This painting is a departure from Reni's previous Cecilia works, as it privileges her status as the patron saint of music. Depicted in half length, Cecilia holds a bow and violin at her side. Gazing upward, it appears that unseen heavenly music has captured her attention and interrupted her playing. A few organ pipes in the background complete the image. Though there is no evidence to explain why Sfondrato would have commissioned this work, I speculate that the painting makes a commentary on the Counter-Reformation's attitude towards music. The Post-Tridentine Church was concerned that the "scandalous noise" of polyphony⁵⁵ could interfere with music's potential for religious communication.⁵⁶ As a result, the Church commissioned musicians to compose more simplistic music. Their motives were to allow the people's voices to be heard over the instruments, allowing a more intense and vital connection with God.⁵⁷ Because this was such an important topic at the time, it may well be that this painting references the simpler and more spiritual nature of seventeenth-century church music.

Guercino's Depiction of St. Cecilia

Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, called Guercino (1591-1666) is considered one of the most important seventeenth-century Italian painters and one of the great innovators of the High Baroque.⁵⁸ Though Guercino was not a Bolognese artist, he was influenced by the Carracci and Reni and spent time in Bologna. Guercino, too, participated in the

⁵⁴ This painting is now housed in the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California.

⁵⁵ A type of music that uses a combination of rhythms. It gained popularity during the Western Schism (1378-1417).

⁵⁶ Malvasia, *Life of the Carracci*, 45.

⁵⁷ Douglas Wilfred, *Church Music in History and Practice*, 65.

⁵⁸ Denis Mahon, *Guercino* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 7.

Bolognese tradition of painting St. Cecilia. In 1649, Guercino painted *St. Cecilia* for the Marchesa Virginia Turca Bevilacqua (Figure 8).⁵⁹ This painting departs from the previous works reviewed in this chapter, for instead of gazing into the heavens, surrounded by unused instruments, Guercino's Cecilia is very much engaged in her music making. Cecilia is represented in profile, her richly colored gown of yellow, red and blue contrasts well with the stark black background. The brooch at her throat and the pearls in her hair are rich and luminescent. At this late date, it seems Cecilia's place as patron saint of music has propelled her from the obscure virgin-martyr to new heights of popularity, as Guercino portrays her as a musician with no reference made to her saintly status.

The evolution of the image of St. Cecilia has its origins in Bologna, where she proved to be a popular subject among Bolognese artists. Raphael resurrected Cecilia from obscurity and developed a new iconographical identity by associating her with music. Though Raphael could not have predicted the Counter-Reformation, his work, coupled with new attitudes towards sanctity, ensured Cecilia's enduring popularity in the arts. The Counter-Reformation was also responsible for appropriating the association between Cecilia and music, while propagating new images depicting the saint. No longer content to have Cecilia depicted as the patron of music, the Church began to emphasize the saintly aspects of her life, as a model for the faithful. This new agenda would be fully realized in Domenichino's *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia* executed for the Polet Chapel.

⁵⁹ This painting is now housed in the Dulwich Picture Gallery outside London.

Early Life and the Carracci Academy

Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino, was born in Bologna in 1581, the son of a moderately well-off shoemaker. As a young boy, Domenichino trained with the Flemish Mannerist painter, Denys Calvaert, who had also trained the young Guido Reni. In his Felsina Pittrice, published in 1678, Carlo Cesare Malvasia provides numerous accounts of Calvaert's temper and greed, which created poor working conditions in his studio.⁶⁰ Due to the instability of this environment, Domenichino left Calvaert in 1595, to study at the Accademia degli Incamminati, run by the three Carracci, Annibale, Ludovico and Agostino.⁶¹ This move would prove critical to Domenichino's success as an artist, for it was the Carracci who led the way in producing the great stylistic change in art that came to be called Baroque. Their style, hailed in the seventeenth century as the salvation of art from a period of degradation, eventually chartered the course of Italian art for the next two centuries.⁶² Working under the tutelage of Ludovico Carracci and surrounded by contemporaries such as Guido Reni and Francesco Albani, Domenichino's artistic talents were able to develop and advance in the new artistic style.

The Seicento biographers provide only limited information regarding Domenichino's first twenty years. From studies concerning the curriculum of the Carracci Academy,⁶³ it is understood that Domenichino received an artistic education with a liberal humanistic emphasis. The ideal of the Academy was to achieve an

⁶⁰ Carlo Cesare Malvasia, The Life of Guido Reni, ed. Catherine and Robert Enggass (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1980), 43.

⁶¹ Spear, Domenichino, 8.

⁶² Charles Dempsey, "Some Observations on the Education of Artists in Florence and Bologna During the Later Sixteenth Century," The Art Bulletin 62 (1980): 559.

⁶³ See Donald Posner 1972 "Annibale Carracci and His School: The Painting of the Herrera Chapel" Arte Antica e Moderna 12 (1960): 397-342; A.W.A. Boschloo "Review of Annibale Carracci by Donald Posner" Paragone 269 (1972): 66-79; Charles Dempsey, Beginning of Baroque Style (Glückstadt, Germany, 1977).

absolute parallelism between painting and poetry; their philosophy was that the painted image must be able to be expressed in words, while the sentiment that appears in the faces and actions of the figures must equally be able to be well narrated.⁶⁴ The dedication to rendering emotionally complex figures would later become a hallmark of Domenichino's *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*.⁶⁵ The Carracci also encouraged their students to advance their talents through the study of the best examples of ancient and Renaissance art. They singled out Raphael as the High Renaissance artist to emulate. Raphael's standard of beauty and clarity shaped many of the young artists' oeuvres at the Carracci Academy, including Domenichino, whose deep admiration of Raphael is evident in many of his works.⁶⁶ With this artistic education in hand, Domenichino left Bologna in 1602 and followed his compatriots, Reni and Albani, to Rome.⁶⁷

Rome and Annibale Carracci

A review of Domenichino's first eight years in Rome indicates that his success was far from meteoric. While Reni established himself as a successful artist in Rome and Albani worked as Annibale Carracci's principal assistant on numerous projects, Domenichino was left to rely on those in the Carracci circle in Rome to recommend him for commissions. His frescoes were the result of sub-commissions and were not very lucrative; the majority of his oils were small and of limited consequence by the standards of success in Rome's competitive art market; and he did not win a commission for an altarpiece in a Roman church, a premiere sign of artistic status, until 1614.⁶⁸ It is no

⁶⁴ G.C. Argan, "Il Tasso e le Arti Figurative," *Studi e Note dal Bramante al Canova* Rome (1970): 111-130.

⁶⁵ Spear, *Domenichino*, 8.

⁶⁶ Marcia F. Hall, *After Raphael: Painting in Central Italy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 282.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

surprise, then, that Domenichino contemplated returning to Bologna numerous times during his early years in Rome.⁶⁹

Fortunately, Domenichino's luck changed when he was named Annibale Carracci's principal assistant in 1606.⁷⁰ Annibale, who had moved to Rome shortly before Domenichino joined the Carracci Academy, was regarded as the artist who restored the grandeur of Roman art to heights unknown since the time of Raphael.⁷¹ According to Giovanni Pietro Bellori, Annibale dedicated himself to Raphael and, by following him as a master and guide, was able to better his inventions and reach perfect imitation in his art.⁷² It is evident that many who saw Annibale's works believed he was on the brink of a new aesthetic ideal. While working with Annibale, Domenichino began to shed the artistic legacy of Ludovico Carracci in favor of Annibale's naturalistic idealization. Nowhere was Annibale's influence more pronounced than in Domenichino's later frescoes. The majority of Annibale's major commissions in Rome were for large-scale frescoes. He was so thoroughly successful in this genre that Bolognese classicism became the prevailing style of fresco decoration in Rome for the first quarter of the seventeenth century.⁷³

When Annibale died in 1609, the first phase in the development of seventeenth-century Roman painting came to a close. As the second phase began, the Mannerist tradition entered its final stage and eventually proved incapable of competing with the

⁶⁹ Spear, *Domenichino*, 9

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷¹ Timothy Erwin, "William Hogarth and the Aesthetics of Nationalism," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 64 (2001): 393.

⁷² G.P. Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultptorie, Architetti Moderni* (Rome, 1736), 32.

⁷³ Ellis Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1962), 13.

grand manner practiced by Annibale's followers.⁷⁴ The immediate future of Roman painting was placed in the hands of the Emilian artists who had followed Annibale to Rome: Guido Reni, Francesco Albani and Domenichino from Bologna and Giovanni Lanfranco from Parma.⁷⁵ However, both Reni and Albani returned to Bologna in 1614. Their departure left Domenichino the leading figure among Bolognese classicists in Rome.⁷⁶ In time, Domenichino took over Annibale's most valued artistic heritage, large-scale decorative fresco paintings, which he succeeded in developing to its fullest perfection.⁷⁷

San Luigi dei Francesi and Counter-Reformation France

In 1612 Domenichino, still struggling to establish himself after the death of his mentor, was on the verge of abandoning his career when he received the commission for the *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*, the work that would establish and solidify his reputation as an artist. The fresco cycle was commissioned by Pierre Polet, an aristocrat from the Noyen region of France, for his chapel dedicated to St. Cecilia in San Luigi dei Francesi. Evidence suggests that Guido Reni was originally asked to work on the fresco cycle, but declined the commission. Cardinal Sfondrato did donate Reni's copy of Raphael's *St. Cecilia in Ecstasy*, which had been painted for Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, upon the chapel's completion.⁷⁸ However, it was Domenichino's paintings of St. Cecilia that elicited praise from his contemporaries and later generations. *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia* demonstrates Domenichino's ability to develop Annibale's fresco style further

⁷⁴ Donald Posner, "Domenichino and Lanfranco: The Early Development of Baroque Painting in Rome," in *The Garland Library of the History of Art*, ed. James S. Ackerman, Sumner McKnight Crosby, Horst W. Janson and Robert Rosenblum (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1976) 8: 131.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁶ Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting*, 15.

⁷⁷ Herman Voss, *Baroque Painting in Rome*, trans. Thomas Pelzel (San Francisco: Alan Wofsky, Fine Arts, 1997), 163.

⁷⁸ D. Stephen Pepper, *Guido Reni* (New York: New York Press, 1984), 211.

in the direction of a meditative classicism, while imbuing the piece with his own artistic imprint.⁷⁹

The setting of this fresco cycle, San Luigi dei Francesi, highlights the important nature of these works and demonstrates the important position St. Cecilia held in Counter-Reformation France. San Luigi dei Francesi, the French national church in Rome, was founded in 1518, during the pontificate of Pope Leo X.⁸⁰ This building project reflected the trend of émigrés in Rome, such as the Florentines, the Spanish, the Sieneese and the French, in building their own churches and oratories to serve as gathering places for their communities.⁸¹ San Luigi would become an important gathering place for the French population as they received news of the Civil Wars, sparked by the Reformation, ravaging their country. Beginning in April 1562, the wars pitted French Catholics and French Protestants (Huguenots) against each other, as each vied for the souls of their countrymen. San Luigi dei Francesi had special significance when reports of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre arrived from Paris. A special mass was held celebrating the French king, Charles IX's (r. 1550-1574), mass murder of thousands of Huguenots.⁸² The official account, provided by Pope Gregory XIII's secretary, gives pre-eminence to the content of a banner draped over the entrance of San Luigi. The inscription, in gold characters on a cloth of peacock silk, united the names of Pope

⁷⁹ Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting*, 18.

⁸⁰ Leo X's pontificate began in 1513 and ended with his death in 1521. E. Howe, "Architecture in Vasari's 'Massacre of the Huguenots'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976): 260.

⁸¹ Christoph L. Frommel, "Papal Policy: The Planning of Rome During the Renaissance," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1986): 55.

⁸² The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre was a wave of Catholic mob violence against the Huguenots, during the French Wars of Religion. Traditionally believed to have been instigated by Catherine de' Medici, the mother of King Charles IX, the massacre took place six days after the wedding of the king's sister to the Protestant Henry of Navarre. This was an occasion for which many of the most wealthy and prominent Huguenots had gathered in largely Catholic Paris. Events began two days after the attempted assassination of Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, a Huguenot military leader. Starting on 24 August 1572 (the feast of Bartholomew the Apostle) with the murder of Coligny, the massacres spread throughout Paris, and later to other cities and the countryside, lasting for several months.

Gregory XIII⁸³ and King Charles IX as victorious in Catholicism's battle against the heretics. The banner, in particular, recognized Charles IX's success in vanquishing the militant Protestant forces from Paris:

Charles IX the most Christian king of the French whose ardent
zeal for the Lord God had destroyed all the heretics and enemies
in his kingdom like an avenging angel sent from the divine⁸⁴

This information serves to highlight the important place San Luigi held in the French community in Rome. San Luigi was inexplicably linked to the Counter-Reformation movement, and it is only fitting that St. Cecilia, whose legend was resurrected in France as well as Italy, was depicted on the church's walls. Because San Luigi held a considerable place in the French community, any works featured there would, by association, be imbued with significance.

The sheer violence in France during the Civil Wars provoked the considerable and popular reserves of lay Catholicism. Numerous processions and pilgrimages were conducted to pacify the patron saints, commemorative crosses were erected and new miracles were reported in increasing numbers.⁸⁵ Objects of increasing cult devotion in the churches of Paris included Sts. Geneviève, Jeanne d'Arc, St. Thérèse, St. Louis and St. Cécile.⁸⁶ These saints in particular demonstrated virtues of humility, voluntary poverty, charity, obedience and chastity. These were the primary virtues that Pierre Polet asked Domenichino to display in his fresco cycle. According to the contract, Polet

⁸³ Born in Bologna, Pope Gregory XIII's pontificate lasted from 1572 until his death in 1585.

⁸⁴ The entire text of the banner is reproduced in the 1572 publication Ordine Della Solennissima Processione Fatta dal Sommo Pontifice...per la Felicissima Nova della Destruttione della setta Ugonotana, (Rome)

⁸⁵ Mark Greengrass, The French Reformation (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd, 1987), 77.

⁸⁶ Stephen Wilson, "Cults of Saints in the Churches of Paris," Comparative Studies in Society and History 22 (1980): 551.

specifically asked that the saint's distribution of alms and her martyrdom be depicted; he left the three remaining frescoes to Domenichino's discretion.⁸⁷

Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia

Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia is an important work of art because it demonstrates Domenichino's ability to develop Annibale's fresco style further in the direction of meditative classicism.⁸⁸ In each of the individual frescoes, Domenichino deliberately chose to avoid strong coloring. The effect this colder palette produced was to accentuate the sculptural treatment of the forms, making these scenes Domenichino's most classical achievement.⁸⁹ While he improved upon Annibale's contribution to mural paintings, Domenichino did not equal his mentor in originality and depth of invention. As will become evident on further examination of the individual frescoes, Domenichino typically depended on older prototypes by Raphael, Annibale and Guido Reni, for his compositions.⁹⁰ Though Domenichino's lack of originality did not go unnoticed, his contemporaries did recognize that *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia* ushered in a style of narrative mural painting that became the authoritative standard in antique-oriented history paintings.⁹¹ These same contemporaries also noted Domenichino's erudition and faithful following of the texts describing the life of St. Cecilia.

One of Annibale Carracci's credos was that the depiction of action and its effects on the viewers was the true task of painting.⁹² Domenichino's ability to capture the drama

⁸⁷ Spear, *Domenichino*, 178.

⁸⁸ Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting*, 18.

⁸⁹ John Pope-Hennessy, *The Drawings of Domenichino at Windsor Castle* (London: Phaidon Press, 1946), 17.

⁹⁰ A further discussion of what constituted originality and copy in the seventeenth century can be found under the sub-heading "*St. Cecilia Distributing Alms.*"

⁹¹ Voss, *Baroque Painting in Rome*, 163.

⁹² Steffi Roettgen, *Italian Frescoes of the Baroque Era 1600-1800*, trans. Russell Stochman (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2007), 217.

of St. Cecilia's story in such a way that viewers felt they were eyewitnesses was a skill that his contemporaries considered extraordinary.⁹³ To achieve this multi-layered and realistic narrative, Domenichino created numerous preparatory drawings, many of which survive today and handsomely document his detailed preparations for the Polet fresco cycle. While an analysis of preparatory work for the individual frescoes will be considered later in this chapter, what follows is a brief summation of Domenichino's characteristic preparatory methods.

Fifty-nine drawings for the frescoes have survived, attesting to the fact that Domenichino shared Annibale Carracci's devotion to careful preparatory work.⁹⁴ The series of drawings for the *Scenes of the Life of St. Cecilia* offer an exciting documentation of the evolution of the compositions. The drawings also reveal the artist's concern with exacting detail, continuous and demanding observations, adjustments and refinements, all of which confirm and account for his Seicento reputation as a slow and methodical worker.⁹⁵ Typically, Domenichino would begin this process with a rough drawing of the composition, which would then be followed by a more finished study. Next, he would make numerous figure studies from life. The final stage of his preliminary work concluded with a full cartoon that would be used for direct transfer to the surface of the fresco. Art historians have concluded that Domenichino drew his preparatory studies with black chalk on primarily beige, blue or gray papers.⁹⁶ The sheets by Domenichino that survive reflect an artist whose searching and sensitive mind explored every figure to its logical fulfillment.

⁹³ Ibid., 217.

⁹⁴ Waterhouse, *Italian Baroque Painting*, 18.

⁹⁵ Richard E. Spear, "Preparatory Drawings by Domenichino," *Master Drawings* 6 (Summer 1968): 128.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 128.

Saints Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel

Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel, designed in 1612, was the first fresco Domenichino executed for the Polet Chapel (Figure 9).⁹⁷ The scene illustrates the moment Valerian returned from his audience with Pope Urban I. According to The Acts, Valerian found Cecilia deep in prayer with an angel at her side. The Acts goes on to state that the winged angel

Held in its hand two crowns of roses and lilies. One of these it placed on Cecilia's head, the other on Valerian's...and the angel said to the two spouses, 'be worthy of keeping these crowns through the purity of your hearts and the holiness of your bodies... these flowers will never fade, their aroma will remain sweet forever'."

The translation of this text into visual language had a strong tradition in Bolognese art and it is apparent that Domenichino's representation was influenced by Guido Reni's depiction of the same scene, created for Santa Cecilia in Trastevere.⁹⁸ Malvasia published an excerpt from a letter written by Domenichino during his brief sojourn to Bologna in 1612, in which he enthusiastically praised Reni's works.⁹⁹ His "discovery" of Reni's art, fresh on his mind explains, why Domenichino's first fresco in the Polet Chapel took at its starting point one of Reni's famed Roman works.

Compositionally, the two *Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel* are very similar. Both artists feature a generalized background, with Cecilia and Valerian on either side of an angel, who is in the act of crowning the two saints with wreaths of flowers. Domenichino, though, added his own artistic touch by stripping Reni's work of its Vanni-like, pearlescent colors and substituting primaries and greens. Domenichino

⁹⁷ Spear, *Domenichino*, 179.

⁹⁸ Discussed in further detail in Chapter 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

also rejected Reni's more elegant figures by adopting weighty, Annibalesque fabrics and postures.¹⁰⁰ As a result, Reni's image is transformed into a more real and humanized expression of the story, which served to make this miraculous occurrence more plausible to a seventeenth-century viewing audience.

Although art historians presume that Domenichino prepared extensively for the Polet Chapel, only three drawings exist for *Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel*. Windsor Castle, which has a large collection of Domenichino's drawings, houses these three early studies for the head of the angel in this fresco.¹⁰¹ All three drawings were done in black chalk heightened with white, on light gray-blue paper, Domenichino's preferred drawing media. The first of the series measures 383 x 247 mm and features a not quite fully realized head. The second work, measuring 331 x 207 mm, is slightly more ambitious, with its full-length putto with both arms fully raised. The position of the putto's arms and legs closely resembles the angel in the fresco's final form. The final drawing measures 372 x 200 mm and depicts a full-length putto with its left arm raised.¹⁰² Though extensive preparatory work for *Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel* does not survive, these three drawings provide a wealth of information in regard to Domenichino's initial conceptions for this project.

From a cultural perspective, *Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel* would have particular resonance with an audience informed by the Counter-Reformation. This was the moment in the story when Cecilia and Valerian bound themselves together and to the Church. Drawing on the scriptural descriptions of the Church as the bride of Christ, seventeenth-century Catholics made a parallel between the heresy of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰¹ Pope-Hennessy, The Drawings of Domenichino, 85.

¹⁰² Ibid., 85.

Protestantism and adultery. Seventeenth-century French priests, such as Jean Talpin, Robert Cénear and René Bénoit, frequently made this allusion in their popular sermons. The implication of this analogy was that, by breaking away from the Church, the Protestants were committing an act akin to adultery.¹⁰³ This was not just a scene from St. Cecilia's life, but also an image that was imbued with contemporary religious meaning and convictions. By accepting the Christian faith and agreeing to live a life of chastity, with his wife, Valerian chose to eschew the world of the flesh and concentrate on the higher principles offered by the Church.

St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor

St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor was the second fresco Domenichino created for Pierre Polet (Figure 10). This work depicts the moment that Cecilia, upon hearing of Valerian's execution, gives the poor of Rome all of his possessions. While Reni's influence can clearly be seen in the previous fresco, this work is evidence that Annibale Carracci continued to dominate Domenichino's artistic vision. Carlo Cesare Malvasia, writing in the 1678, noted that *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor* was generally held to be the most beautiful of the cycle, but he also pointed out that the design of the piece had been taken from Annibale's *The Almsgiving of St. Roch* (Figure 11).

The Almsgiving of St. Roch, created between 1588 and 1595, was the last great altarpiece executed by Annibale Carracci before he left for Rome.¹⁰⁴ Malvasia called it one of Annibale's best known altarpieces and stated that it was a "masterpiece that deserves even more fame that it already enjoys...Annibale never produced a composition

¹⁰³ Luc Rocaute, Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co, 2004), 33.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Cropper, The Domenichino Affair (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 10.

more masterly.”¹⁰⁵ *The Almsgiving of St. Roch*, therefore, was a crucial work for the Carracci Academy in the mid-1590s when Domenichino was a student. The altarpiece evidently made a strong impression on the young artist, who heavily references the work in the Polet Chapel. Though Domenichino would be dogged by rumors of plagiarism throughout his career, *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms* was meant to pay homage to Annibale. Malvasia, who was a great admirer of the Carracci, defended Domenichino when he wrote that Domenichino’s borrowing from *The Almsgiving of St. Roch* was the result of “choice not malice.”¹⁰⁶ Domenichino and his supporters saw this as legitimate and productive emulation, but *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor* raises the question as to what constituted imitation and novelty in seventeenth-century Rome. In a sense, Domenichino’s intention may have been to improve on the work of his master. Though he does reference the main actions depicted in *St. Roch*, he makes the image his own by moderating the surge of movement and the raking light, replacing the Venetian background with more conventional antique architecture and by providing more balance to the figures. Thus, Domenichino succeeded in rephrasing an early pre-Roman work by Annibale in terms of his own late Roman style.

Clearly, both works bear a striking resemblance to each other. One reason for this, as previously mentioned, is that by referencing *The Almsgiving of St. Roch* Domenichino was able to honor and improve upon his former instructor’s celebrated work. A second factor was the sheer novelty of the composition. In researching the artworks depicting St. Cecilia, it became apparent that no known works survive that depict St. Cecilia distributing alms. One could conclude, therefore, that Domenichino

¹⁰⁵ Malvasia, *Life of the Carracci*, 106.

¹⁰⁶ Cropper, *The Domenichino Affair*, 140.

was the first major artist to translate this story from the Acts into pictorial form. Because the subject was unusual and no established pictorial conventions from which Domenichino could draw, it was only natural for him to turn to Annibale's treatment of a similar subject. The image in *The Almsgiving of St. Roch* was so definitive that there was no other way to envision a similar scene.¹⁰⁷

Though it may seem that Domenichino plagiarized Annibale's ideas, not all of his contemporaries viewed it that way. Originality and repetition were intimately bound to one another in the painting and artistic discourse of the Baroque period. The modern concept of "originality" (a term coined in the eighteenth century) did not exist in the Baroque era.¹⁰⁸ On the contrary, repetition and imitation was an embedded practice that can be traced from one form or another throughout the history of Western art. In some instances, repetition was perceived positively as wit and novelty and in other instances negatively as theft- although even theft could itself be considered a good thing when in the hands of an able thief. The objects of imitation were various, in some instances an artist chose to imitate another artist's style, while in other cases similar themes and even specific details were repeated. These obvious allusions could not have been lost on an erudite audience, who would have been familiar with popular works, such as *The Almsgiving of St. Roch*, through prints. An ambition to succeed and surpass one's predecessors was the driving force behind the emulative impulse of the Baroque period. Whether the artist was successful or not is an issue of individual judgment, but an

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁸ Maria H. Loh, "New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Italian Baroque Practice and Theory," *The Art Bulletin* 86, (September 2004): 477.

inspired one upmanship usually motivated repetition.¹⁰⁹ As the Baroque theorist Secondo Lancellotti pointed out

There are many books in one book, and many authors speak through the mouth of one author...we feel great delight when we see two equal forces come together in competition.¹¹⁰

The appropriation of other artists' compositions was quite common in Domenichino's practice. But because Domenichino transformed old motifs, he allowed viewers to appreciate his works, and his prototypes, in a different light and thus the repetition was judged a success.¹¹¹ Poussin, speaking about Domenichino's paintings, said

Novelty in paintings does not consist above all in choosing a subject matter that has never before been seen, but upon a good and novel arrangement and expression, thanks to which the subject, through in itself ordinary and worn, becomes new and singular.¹¹²

Domenichino did rely heavily on Annibale's *The Almsgiving of St. Roch*, yet the twenty-four surviving preparatory drawings indicate that Domenichino conducted exhaustive studies of form and light before he arrived at his finished product. The collection at Windsor Castle contains eighteen figure studies for the various participants in the narrative (Figures 12 and 13). Executed in black chalk heightened with white on brownish-gray paper, these drawings demonstrate Domenichino's interest in depicting dynamic and realistic poses.¹¹³ Most striking is a series of drawings in the Louvre. These preparatory drawings do contain cursorily drawn facial features, but Domenichino

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 492.

¹¹⁰ Secondo Lancellotti, *L'Hoggi di Overo il Mondo non Peggiora ne Più Calamitoso del Passato* (Venice: Giovanni Guerigli, 1672).

¹¹¹ Loh, *Repetition*, 495.

¹¹² Nicolas Poussin, "Osservazioni di Nicolo Pussino Sopra la Pittura," in *Le Vite de Pittori, Scultori et Architetti Moderni*, ed. Giovanni Pietro Bellori (Rome: Mascardi, 1672).

¹¹³ Pope-Hennessy, *The Drawings of Domenichino*, 81.

primarily used these exercises to explore the organization of shadows within the fresco.¹¹⁴

Domenichino's fresco of *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor* is of particular interest not only because Domenichino boldly references *The Almsgiving of St. Roch*, but also because it was one of the scenes that Pierre Polet expressly requested for his chapel. In a world informed by the Counter-Reformation, poverty and almsgiving gained fresh currency as the Post-Tridentine ethos popularized the notion of serving Christ by helping the sick and the poor.¹¹⁵ France, in particular, reeling from the aftermath of the Religious Wars, began to reevaluate the purpose of almsgiving and the place of the poor in French society. The interest in helping those less fortunate was spearheaded by France's pious laity, who became an important presence in the rejuvenation of the French Catholic religious life in the seventeenth century. Books such as St. Francis de Sales' Introduction à la Vie Dévoté, published in 1609, were used as religious guidebooks for lay communities.¹¹⁶ In a review of this literary genre, it becomes apparent that French religious writers and dévots were particularly concerned with the differences between the rich and the poor. The French cardinal and writer Pierre de Bérulle (1572-1629), considered by many to be the spiritual founder of the French School of Counter-Reformation spirituality, popularized the notion of Christ as a poor man and suggested that the poor masses were the present day equivalent of Christ among us. The ideal poor were reputed to have Christ-like virtues: patience, humility and passivity with respect to the will of God. Therefore, notions of popular laity expounded on the idea that the poor

¹¹⁴ Spear, Preparatory Drawings, 112.

¹¹⁵ Ole Peter Grill, Andrew Cunningham and John Arrizabalaga, Health Care and Poor Relief in Counter-Reformation Europe (London: Routledge), 5.

¹¹⁶ Martha Kellogg Smith, Les Nus-Pieds et la Pauvre D'Esprit: French Counter-Reformation Thought and the Peasant Paintings of the Le Nain Brothers (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 127.

man was beloved by God and almsgiving, as a result, came to be seen as a sacred exchange between the rich and the poor.¹¹⁷ Pierre Polet, as an educated Frenchman, would have been well aware of the religious literature circulating in his country. By depicting Cecilia, a wealthy lay woman, giving over all of her worldly possessions to the poor, he was certainly referencing this Holy Communion between the rich and the poor popularized in France.

The Condemnation of St. Cecilia

The Condemnation of St. Cecilia was the third fresco Domenichino created for the Polet cycle (Figure 14). After Valerian and his brother Tiburtius were put to death, Cecilia was formally ordered to appear before Almachius, the Roman prefect, for questioning. Her testimony, as reported in the Acts, was firm and unwaveringly true to her Christian faith. Impatient with Cecilia's impertinence, Almachius offered her an ultimatum: sacrifice to the Roman gods and rebuke her Christian faith or she would be put to death. Cecilia's refusal sealed her fate, and she was sentenced to death. The fresco depicting this scene is considered one of the highpoints of Domenichino's classicizing art, for he responded to the story by composing the equivalent of a sarcophagus in fresco. In this piece, Domenichino is not looking towards Annibale, but to Raphael and his *Sacrifice at Lystra*, yet Domenichino reconfigured Raphael's work to best illustrate the story (Figure 15).¹¹⁸

Domenichino reduced the number of figures and isolated them from one another, allowing an intense and focused study of Almachius' fury and Cecilia's piety. Cecilia,

¹¹⁷ Smith, Les Nus-Pieds, 129.

¹¹⁸ The *Sacrifice at Lystra* was executed between 1515 and 1516. It is now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The painting illustrates the miracle of the curing of the cripple, recorded in Acts Chapter 4. Spear, Domenichino, 181.

the central figure, appears serene and languid, as Almachius hunches on his throne, in the right corner, with his arm outstretched sentencing her. Domenichino diligently anchors this scene in its appropriate context and includes a variety of studious references to antique costume, furniture and sculpture. Further reference is made to Roman antiquity in the frieze on which Almachius' throne sits, which features Astrea, the protagonist in an ancient Roman allegory that parallels the story of Cecilia. Astrea is often denoted as the "star maiden" in ancient literature. She lived among mortals during the Golden Age, but she could no longer tolerate man's wickedness and left for the heavens to become the star Virgo. As a symbol of virginity and justice, she provided the perfect ancient counterpart to Cecilia.¹¹⁹ Domenichino also includes references foreshadowing Cecilia's own sacrifice, by including a young goat, led into the room by two men, presumably to be sacrificed to Jupiter, whose statue appears in the background. The rich details Domenichino included in this piece did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. The seventeenth-century painter and biographer, Giambattista Passeri, expressed his admiration when he wrote that in *The Condemnation of St. Cecilia* Domenichino "outdid himself in refinement of drawing, color and expression."¹²⁰

The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia

The fourth fresco in the series is *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* (Figure 16). Almachius had ordered that Cecilia be boiled alive in her bath. Miraculously, she was unaffected by the heat and steam, and thus Almachius ordered her decapitated. The executioner struck her neck three times, but was unable to kill her. He left Cecilia dying. Various Christians who had been waiting outside entered Cecilia's home and discovered

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 190.

¹²⁰ Giambattista Passeri, *Die Künstlerbiographien von Giovanni Battista Passeri* (Liepzig and Vienna, 1934), 36.

the tragedy. For three days she clung to life, but on the third day, after bequeathing her home to Pope Urban I, she died. Domenichino condenses all three acts into one emotional scene. Christians reach out to touch the blood on the floor, as Cecilia leans against her bath. Pope Urban gives his final blessing as an angel appears in the upper right corner with a palm and crown, attributes of the Christian martyrs. Every gesture and response serves to highlight the sanctity of Cecilia's martyrdom.

Unlike *The Condemnation of St. Cecilia* and *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor*, the interior does not evoke the imagery of ancient Rome as convincingly.¹²¹ The focus of the fresco is centered on the dying figure of St. Cecilia, and perhaps Domenichino did not want viewers to be distracted by elaborate settings and costumes. The centrality of Cecilia is underscored by the color palette Domenichino chose for this scene. While reds, greens and blues dominate, Cecilia's clothing is entirely white, symbolizing her virginity and linking her with the angel above, also dressed in white. As has been noted earlier, several of Domenichino's frescoes were inspired by other artists' works, but no known precedents exist for this piece. It is in this work that Domenichino finally comes into his own as an artist.

The originality of the composition of *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* may explain the large quantity of preparatory drawings associated with this fresco. Because Domenichino was not relying on any prototypes for this fresco, he had to prepare numerous studies to work out the content of the image. The eighteen surviving works reveal that *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* went through numerous incarnations before Domenichino settled on the final form. One such study for the central group depicts St. Cecilia as she is in the fresco's final form, but the schema differs from that of the

¹²¹ Spear, Domenichino, 182.

completed work in that a second woman is shown standing behind the saint (Figure 17).¹²² Another drawing, which differs from the final fresco, depicts the angel holding a cloak, an idea Domenichino discarded in favor of the palm leaf and wreath of flowers. The remainder of the drawings contain numerous figural studies, many of which are careful studies of the figures' hands.

The Glorification of St. Cecilia

The final fresco in the Polet cycle, *The Glorification of St. Cecilia* (Figure 18), features the martyred saint being borne to heaven and is appropriately positioned on the vault of the chapel. The angels surrounding her carry her attributes, an organ and a tambourine, and a sword, symbolizing her martyrdom. Although this scene is not described textually, the Acts do mention that when Valerian died the angels carried him to heaven, and one presumes Cecilia would have enjoyed the same fate. As in his earlier works, this scene can find parallels in Raphael's *Vision of Ezekiel* (Figure 19). Domenichino would have been familiar with *Vision of Ezekiel*, as it belonged to the noble Ercolani family of Bologna. Raphael was inspired by antique representations of Jove in the creation of this piece, which depicts God the father surrounded by angelic figures and the four symbols of the Evangelists. Domenichino uses the same outstretched arms and positions the angels in his piece, where Raphael placed the angels bearing God. Domenichino, as a student of the Carracci, began his training by copying Raphael's works, and this fresco illustrates that Raphael's use of archetypical poses and expression continued to inspire him.

¹²²Pope-Hennessy, *The Drawings of Domenichino*, 82.

A complete cartoon for this fresco is preserved in the Louvre and bears markings indicating that it was pricked for transfer.¹²³ These pin holes confirm the drawing's authenticity since the frescoes in San Luigi dei Francesi bear traces of the point of a pin along principal contours. Another complete cartoon of high quality was formerly housed in London in the collection of John Gere. It too is pricked, which raises the curious situation of two cartoons that both have claims to be the working drawing. Richard Spear, an art historian who has studied Domenichino extensively, proposed that the pin holes in the Paris version were caused by actual transfer, and the Gere cartoon was pricked in order to make it form a second cartoon, the one in Paris, which replaced the unsatisfactory initial design.¹²⁴ This assumption is supported by minor differences in the two versions. An additional thick pleat in Cecilia's right sleeve at her neck, and a higher décolletage, distinguish the Gere composition from both the final fresco and the Paris cartoon, which correspond with each other in the lower, unencumbered neckline.

These five frescoes represent an amalgam of Domenichino's artistic influences. The works reference the great artistry of Reni, Annibale Carracci and Raphael as seen through the lens of Domenichino's own artistic vision. As such, the frescoes found an important place not only in the art criticism of the period, but also in the form as well. Numerous artists from the Italian peninsula flocked to study these works and countless French artists made the trek to Rome well into the eighteenth century to study the frescoes in their national church. *The Life of St. Cecilia* was an artistic achievement that resonated with its seventeenth-century viewers. In an age when information was often disseminated through images, *The Life of St. Cecilia* frescoes would have acted as a

¹²³ Spear, Preparatory Drawings, 115.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

reminder of the longevity of the Catholic Church and the lengths men and women would go to in order to defend and preserve their faith.

Conclusion

Domenichino earned little money, about 300 scudi, or the equivalent of two months of average earnings, for his frescoes, but they altered Domenichino's historical fortunes.¹²⁵ Prior to these commissions he had taken as much, if not more, from the history of art as he had given in return. The frescoes in the Polet Chapel reversed that relationship by becoming revered models of refined, deeply moving religious imagery. These works are considered to be the high point of Domenichino's neo-Raphaellesque style. Domenichino updated the principles of Raphael's late works without compromising the strength of Annibale's expressive figures or relinquishing the propriety and clarity of primary colors for elevated subjects. He created a vision in which classical discipline strengthens, rather than weakens, the dramatic poignancy of extreme emotion, and consequently formulated an archetype of the classical Baroque.¹²⁶ This achievement explains Passeri and Bellori's comments that the frescoes won great praise and established Domenichino's reputation.¹²⁷ In Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori e Architetti Moderni, published in 1676, Bellori recounted a story in which Andrea Sacchi, who Bellori says "infinitely praised" the work of Domenichino, met Carlo Maratta in the Polet chapel and asked

Well, Carlo, what do you think of these paintings? If they were in the Stanze of Raphael, wouldn't that make *una bella conversazione*? For some people they're too studied, but for me that study always seems more and more praiseworthy.¹²⁸

Another story, which Bellori included in Le Vite, involved Francesco Albani, who, upon

¹²⁵ Spear, Domenichino, 59.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁷ Passeri, ed. 1934, p. 36-37, and Bellori, ed. 1672, p. 314.

¹²⁸ Andrea Sacchi (1599-1661) was a Baroque painter in Rome. Carlo Maratta (1625-1713) was an Italian Baroque painter. G.P. Bellori, Le Vite, 557.

seeing Carlo Cignani off from Bologna to Rome, begged him “to give a kiss for me to those heavenly walls with *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor* in San Luigi dei Francesi.”¹²⁹ These stories provide evidence that many of Domenichino’s contemporaries looked to these works as examples of exceptional artistry.

Long after *St. Cecilia* as a subject for artistic works began to fade, these five frescoes remained an important part of art criticism and in the vocabulary of forms. Both his *Martyrdom of St. Cecilia* and *The Condemnation of St. Cecilia* were studied closely by the young Pietro da Cortona. Francesco Duquesnoy’s *St. Susanna*, a highly celebrated statue carved in Rome in 1630, offers a marble equivalent of *St. Cecilia* standing before *Almachius* in the *Condemnation* fresco. Numerous French artists, particularly in the eighteenth century, studied the frescoes in their national church. From a lackluster early career to a meteoric rise to fame, these frescoes were responsible for propelling Domenichino to the upper echelons of the Baroque artistic canon.

¹²⁹ Carlo Cignani (1628-1719) was an Italian Baroque painter. *Ibid.*, 242.

Images



Figure 1. Stefano Maderno, *St. Cecilia*, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome, 1600



Figure 2. Raphael Sanzio, called Raphael, *St. Cecilia*, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, 1516

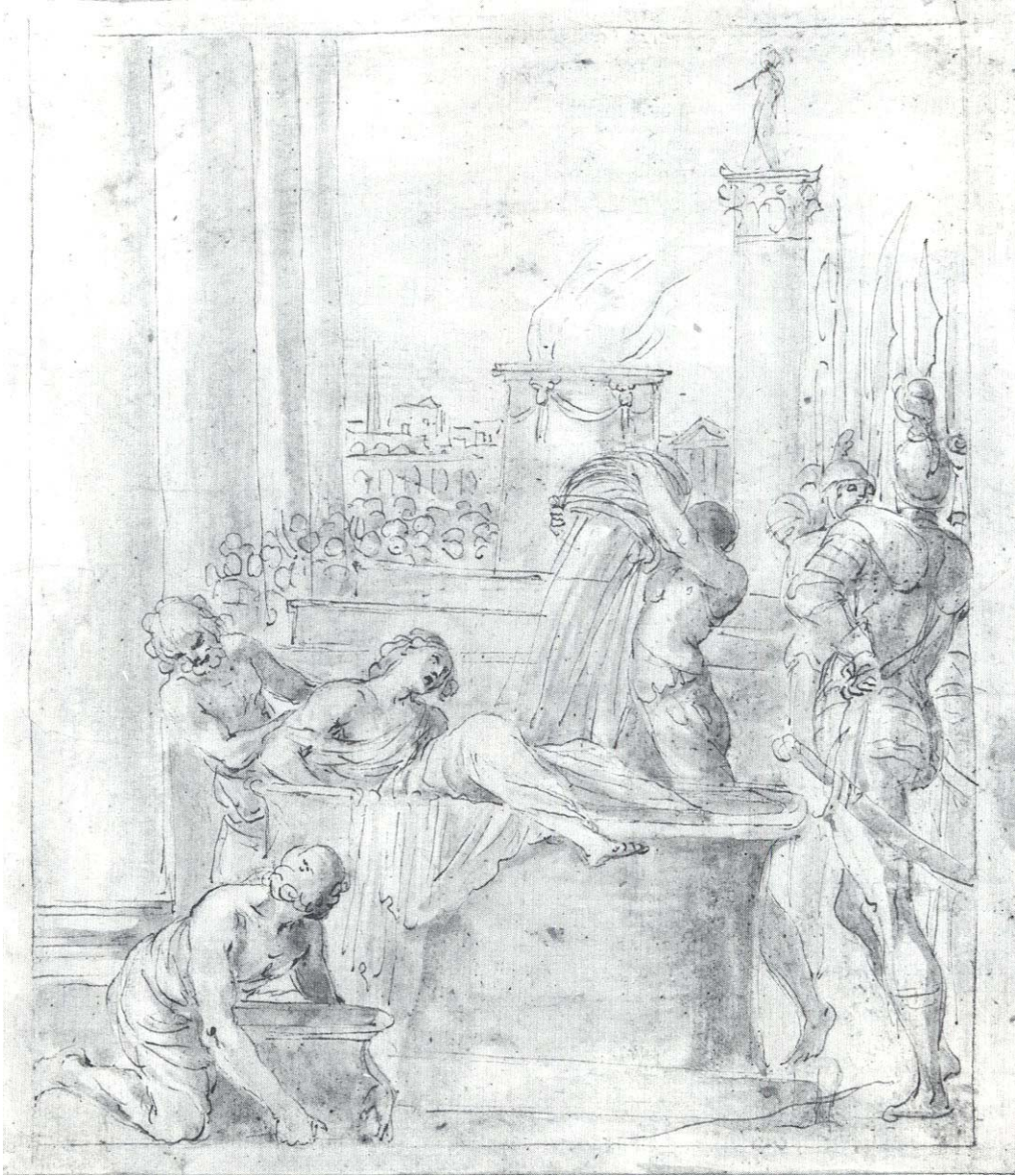


Figure 3. Ludovico Carracci, *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia*, Windsor Castle, UK, 1619



Figure 4. Ludovico Carracci, *St. Cecilia*, Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome, 1603



Figure 5. Guido Reni, copy after Raphael's *St. Cecilia*, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1598



Figure 6. Guido Reni, *An Angel Crowning Sts. Cecilia and Valerian*, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome, 1601



Figure 7. Guido Reni, *St. Cecilia*, Private Collection, New York, 1606



Figure 8. Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, called Guercino, *St. Cecilia*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 1646

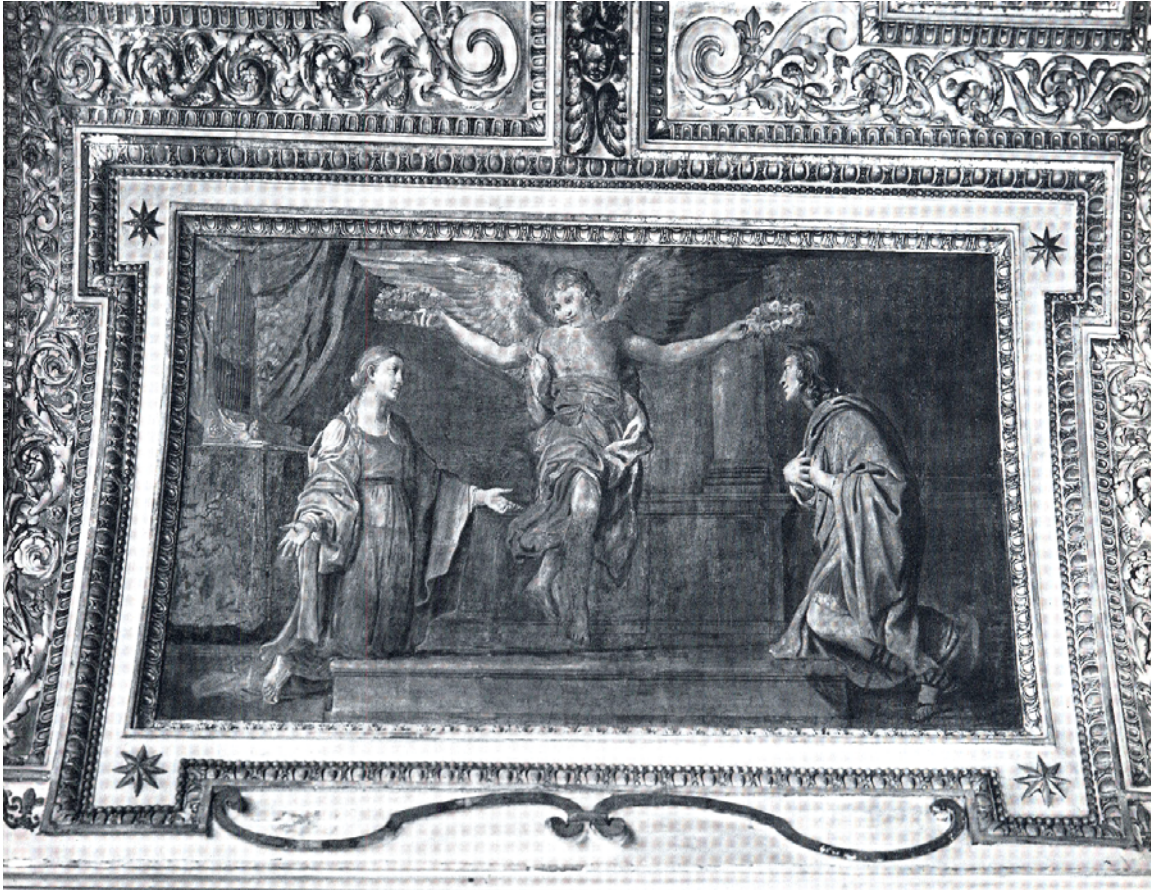


Figure 9. Domenichino, *Sts. Cecilia and Valerian Crowned by an Angel*, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615



Figure 10. Domenichino, *St. Cecilia Distributing Alms to the Poor*, San Luigi dei Francesi, 1612-1615



Figure 11. Annibale Carracci, *The Almsgiving of St. Roch*, Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany, 1590-1595



Figure 12. Domenichino, Study of a beggar for *The Almsgiving of St. Cecilia*, Windsor Castle, UK, 1612-1615



Figure 13. Domenichino, a study for *The Almsgiving of St. Cecilia*, Windsor Castle, UK, 1612-1615

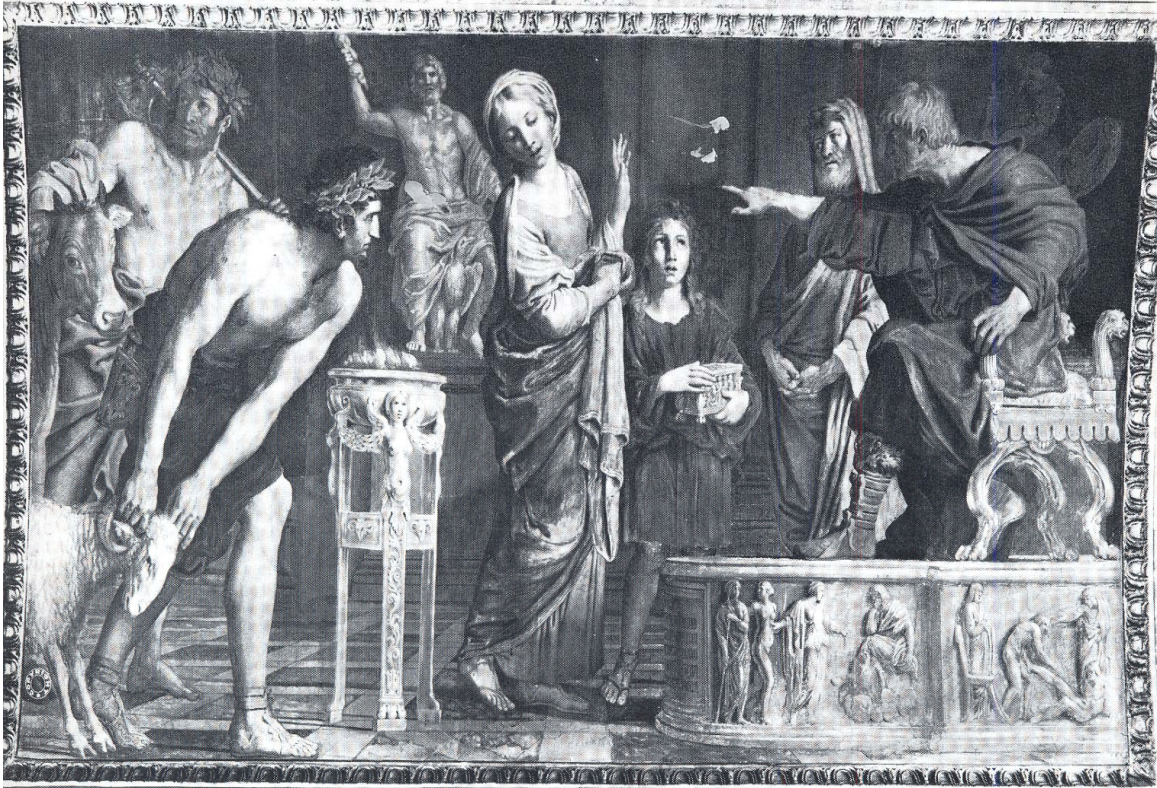


Figure 14. Domenichino, *The Condemnation of St. Cecilia*, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615



Figure 15. Raphael, *Sacrifice at Lystra*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK



Figure 16. Domenichino, *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia*, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615



Figure 17. Domenichino, Study for *The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia*, Windsor Castle, UK, 1612-1615



Figure 18. Domenichino, *The Glorification of St. Cecilia*, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, 1612-1615



Figure 19. Raphael, *Vision of Ezekiel*, Pitti Palace, Florence, 1518

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Vita

Emily Freeman was born on January 29, 1981, in Houston, Texas, to Mark and Marinan Freeman. She grew up in Houston and San Angelo, Texas, with her mother and younger sister, Lana. She graduated from San Angelo Central High School in 1999 and attended the University of Texas at Austin, where she received a bachelor's degree in English and Classics in May of 2005. After working at an Austin law firm for a number of years, contemplating law school, Emily realized that Art History was where her passions truly lay and entered Texas Christian University's graduate Art History program in August of 2005. During her tenure at Texas Christian, Emily has primarily focused on religious images in Italian Renaissance art. She also served as intern to the Registrar at the renowned Kimbell Art Museum and served as Teaching Assistant to the faculty at Texas Christian University. Emily will complete her Graduate Degree in May of 2008.

Abstract

Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino, was one of the most influential exponents of the seventeenth-century classical style. Through his critical analysis of the art of Raphael and Annibale Carracci and his frequent references to classical art, he helped to define early Baroque art in Italy. Though he is now remembered as one of the great artists of the seventeenth century, his rise to fame was far from meteoric. His fortunes changed, however, with his frescoes for the Polet Chapel in Rome. Collectively known as *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*, these five frescoes propelled Domenichino from a little-known Bolognese artist to new heights, as one of the most celebrated painters of his generation.

St. Cecilia was a popular figure in seventeenth-century paintings and many of Domenichino's contemporaries and immediate predecessors depicted her, yet Domenichino's fresco cycle stands out from the creations of other artists working in the same period. This thesis argues that Domenichino's inventive interpretation of St. Cecilia's hagiography for the Polet Chapel was the driving force behind his success. To support this argument, this paper examines three main factors that contributed to the commission, the execution and the success of the *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia*. First, I provide relevant social and historical information outlining the revival of St. Cecilia's cult in the seventeenth century. Second, I analyze the treatment of St. Cecilia in art by Domenichino's contemporaries and his immediate predecessors. Finally, I examine the individual frescoes in *Scenes from the Life of St. Cecilia* and demonstrate

how his innovative interpretation of her hagiography added new themes to the canon of work featuring St. Cecilia.