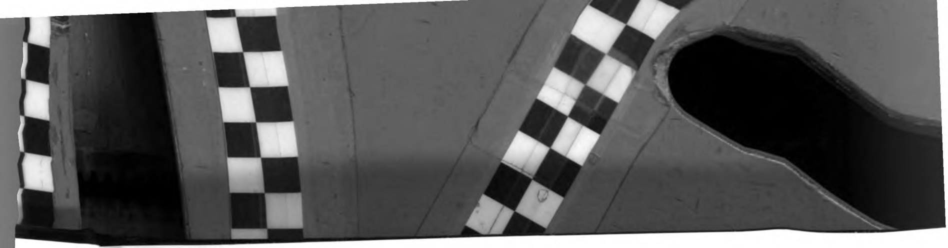

CARAVAGGIO AND LATE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art

1991

ABSTRACT

CARAVAGGIO AND LATE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

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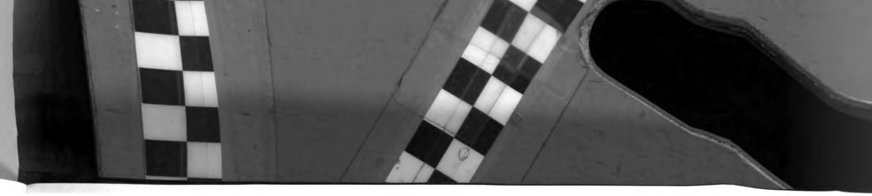
Caravaggio (1571-1610) is often described as a rebel; the first modern artist. Yet, on an intellectual level, the concepts of lighting and naturalism seen in his works place him between such theoreticians as Leonardo, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, or Marsilio Ficino and Galileo Galilei or even Isaac Newton.

Caravaggio likely knew Lomazzo's light and color theory from his apprenticeship to Simone Peterzano in Milan. His Roman paintings for his first patron, Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, however, show an increasingly sophisticated use of light and space paralleling the contemporary thought of the "philosophers of nature," Bernardino Telesio and, especially, Francesco Patrizi, professor of platonic philosophy at the University of Rome from 1592-1597. Comparing Caravaggio's Del Montean works with the theories of these philosophers (noting cross-currents in Galileo, whom Del Monte supported) the author speculates that the artist's maturation may owe more to the intellectual climate of Rome than is generally recognized.



FOR ANCHISES BY THE IVORY GATE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe an incalculable debt to the many persons who have had an influence, directly or otherwise, upon the formulation of this study and who assisted in seeing it to its completion. Foremost among these are the members of my thesis committee at Michigan State University:

Dr. Susan J. Bandes (Thesis Advisor), Department of Art
Dr. Webster Smith, Department of Art
Dr. Harold T. Walsh, Department of Philosophy.

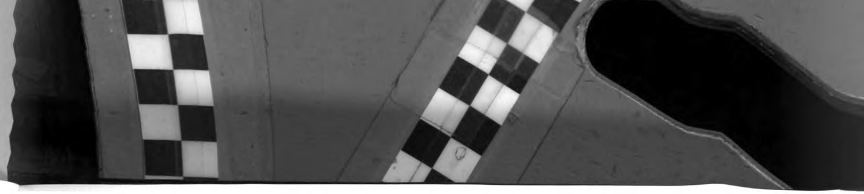
I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the following faculty of the Department of Art: Dr. Paul W. Deussen, Dr. Susan Pinto Madigan, Dr. Sadayoshi Omoto, Dr. Janice D. Simpson, the late Dr. Molly Smith, Dr. Linda O. Stanford and Dr. Eldon N. VanLiere.

Thanks also to Mr. Jack Painter, Director of Louisiana Tech University's Rome program, to Mr. Jonathon Donehoo of Tech's Department of Art and to Dr. C. Wade Meade of the History Department; to Mr. Joseph Connors, Director of the American Academy in Rome and to the Academy's librarian Ms. Lucilla Marino and her superb staff.

I owe a word of gratitude, as well, to Dr. Anna Maria Matteucci of the University of Bologna's Dipartimento delle Arti Visive; to Dr. Franca T. Camiz, whose advice during my visit to Temple University in Rome was a turning point in the development of this thesis, and to Dr. Giorgio Sandri of the Dipartimento di Filosofia at the University of

Bologna, whose comments regarding Caravaggio shaped this study's direction.

Finally, this study could never have come about without the influence of my parents, whose love of Italy I have enthusiastically embraced; nor without the full support of my wife Debra and my daughter Tiffany who have endured separation, near-poverty, and long periods of distraction and monk-like seclusion on my part so that I might pursue my studies.



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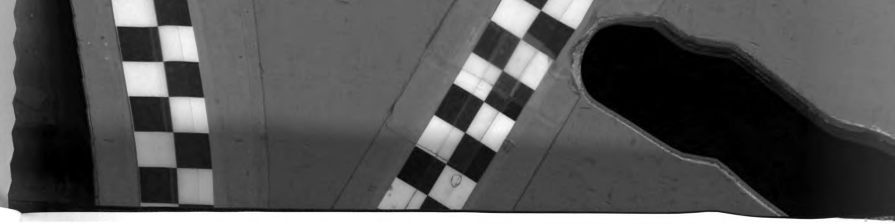

INTRODUCTION

In 1905 Roger Fry wrote of Caravaggio that *"there is hardly any one artist whose work is of such moment as his in the development of modern art,"* and that he was *"the first to proceed not by evolution, but by revolution; the first to rely entirely upon his own temperamental attitude, and to defy tradition and authority."*[1] While there may be some disagreement regarding the specifics of the latter assertions, it cannot be denied that the statement, as a whole, is essentially true with regard to Caravaggio's being a precursor of what we consider the modern artist. Technically and temperamentally, with Caravaggio it seems that we encounter for the first time that fiercely independent spirit which has today almost become synonymous with the term "artist."

The general view of Caravaggio as the tortured artist has become quite comfortable, and is readily acceptable to most students in the history of art. It has a certain resonance to it, and seems to solve many of the problems of comprehending his art. Yet, it has become clearer each year since Roberto Longhi's pioneering efforts of the 1950's, that Caravaggio was not quite the isolated radical that he is often made out to be. Rather, he has come to be better understood as an innovative artist working within many of the conventions of his time, but exploring their outer limits. In many ways, Caravaggio's early pressuring of painting's conventions parallels the pressure being

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[1] Fry, R., *Notes to the Discourses of Reynolds.* London, 1905, p. 170.

brought to bear upon the societal, cultural, scientific, and theological conventions of Europe around 1600, particularly in Rome.

It is a commonplace of Baroque studies to examine much of the period's art in light of the Counter-Reformation; the Counter-Reformation being understood as a reaction to the challenges of Martin Luther. The emphasis has been placed upon the theology of the time, but, as H.O. Evennett has noted, *"the Church of the Counter-Reformation ... was challenged not merely by the revolutionary, yet still Christian, dogmas of Luther and Calvin, but also by the seeping into the European mind of something more subtle, more deeply burrowing under foundations - a general philosophical scepticism and the nascent ideas of free-thought and rationalism."*[2] The intellectual activity of the time was, literally, reshaping the conception of the world, the universe, and mankind's (and God's) place within the scheme of things.

As noted above, it is generally agreed that Caravaggio represents something of a transition between the Renaissance and the modern age; that he and his paintings fit between, for example, Michelangelo and any number of modern painters.[3] On an intellectual level, however, the problematic lighting and naturalism of his art seems to place him more between such theoreticians as Leonardo, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, Marsilio Ficino or Bernardino Telesio and Galileo Galilei or even Isaac Newton -- a shorter span chronologically, but equivalent, perhaps, in scope.

Giovan Pietro Bellori tells us that Caravaggio *"non guardando punto anzi spregiando gli eccellentissimi marmi de gli antichi e le pitture tanto celebri di Raffaelle, si propose la sola natura per*

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[2] Evennett, H.O., *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation*. Cambridge, 1968, p. 24.
[3] Fry referred to Monet.

oggetto del suo pennello."[4] This attitude has been read by many as being fully in character with Caravaggio's acknowledged rebellious nature. Hibbard notes that Caravaggio's contemporaries were, indeed, shocked by his turning away from Renaissance idealism,[5] but then adds this caution: that *"the reputation that Caravaggio brings down to our time and even his supposed utterances ... may have more to do with later theorists and their desire to categorize painters than with Caravaggio's own actual words and practices."*[6] Therefore, we must be careful of what we read into Bellori's report. One must take into account, for instance, that as the Renaissance progressed, *"the humanist belief in the authority and superiority of the ancients gave way to a rising pride in modern achievements."*[7]

Such an attitude as reported by Bellori, rather than being a singular act of disrespect on the part of Caravaggio, appears to be, in fact, consonant with the progression of late Italian Renaissance thought. It is entirely in keeping, moreover, with the affinities of a group referred to as the philosophers of nature, who *"encouraged by this* [rising pride] ... *attempted to replace the natural philosophy of*

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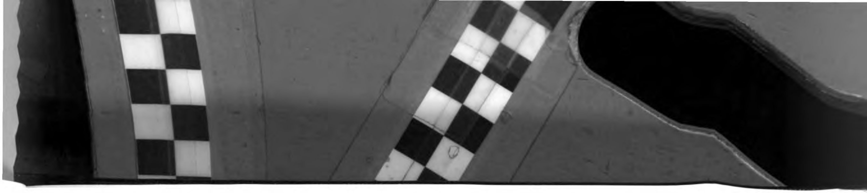
[4] Bellori, G.P., *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (1672), in Ludovici, *Vita del Caravaggio dalle testimonianze del suo tempo.* Milano, 1956, p. 56. Besides Ludovici's collection of biographical sources, others perhaps more accessible to the student are those collected in Friedlaender, W., *Caravaggio Studies*, Princeton, 1974, and Hibbard, H., *Caravaggio*, New York, 1983. Each of these presents the text in both Italian and English. While now somewhat dated due to recent archival discoveries, Friedlaender still offers much to ponder and to inspire. Although a more recent publication, Hibbard's book presents, curiously, some tired arguments regarding sexuality and psychology.

[5] Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 46.

[6] Ibid, p. 48.

[7] Kristeller, P.O., "Renaissance Philosophies", *A History of Philosophical Systems* (Ferm, V., ed.). New York, 1950, p. 234.



Aristotelianism by new, original constructions."[8] More particularly, there are striking affinities between aspects of Caravaggio's art during the critical, formative period of patronage in Rome by Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, and the thought of Francesco Patrizi, professor of Platonic philosophy at Rome's La Sapienza from 1592 until his death in 1597.

Some of Caravaggio's most compelling compositions were produced early in his Roman career. As Luigi Spezzaferro has pointed out, it is particularly noteworthy how Caravaggio seems to first find his way in the early works commissioned by Cardinal Del Monte.[9] Alfred Moir relates that these *"Del Monte pictures form a coherent group. Theirs is a natural, unpretentious world of mute poetry, youthful not only in the age of the models but also in its sense of recent and intoxicating discovery."*[10]

Moir was mostly referring to the secular paintings which Caravaggio executed privately for Del Monte. This sense of "mute poetry" and "recent and intoxicating discovery" also shines forth, however, in the lateral wall paintings of the Contarelli Chapel at San Luigi dei Francesi, the church of the French community in Rome. Here Caravaggio's modern vision seems to find its full, large-scale (and public) expression in the *Calling of St. Matthew* and the *Martyrdom of St. Matthew*. While not a commission from Del Monte proper, it is clear from a contemporary source that Caravaggio was given the opportunity to

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Spezzaferro, L., "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte e il primo tempo del Caravaggio", *Storia dell'arte*, 9-10 (1974), 57.

[10] Moir, A., *Caravaggio*. New York, 1989, p. 15.

execute his first large-scale public work *"per opera del suo cardinale."*[11]

The first aim of this study is to outline Caravaggio's early life and apprentice years in northern Italy with an eye towards understanding the artistic theories to which he may have been exposed. Next, inquiries will be made regarding his development in Rome, followed by an examination of two early Del Montean works, the *Concert* and the *Luteplayer*, along with *The Calling of St. Matthew* and *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew*, in light of the new contemporary philosophies of Bernardino Telesio and, especially, Francesco Patrizi. Finally, an attempt will be made at understanding Caravaggio's startling new vision in the context of the household of Cardinal Del Monte, and the intellectual climate of the time.

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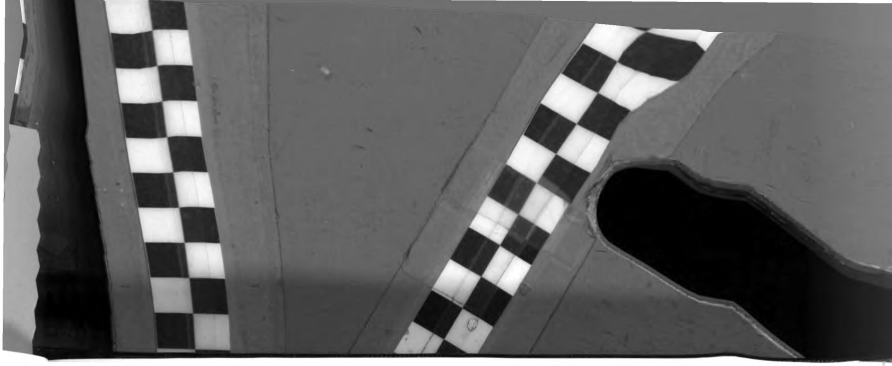
[11] Baglione, G., text in Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 44. Documents relevant to the work in San Luigi are collected and discussed in Mahon's "Addendum to Caravaggio", *Burlington Magazine*, 586 (1952), 3-23.



GENESIS

The artist we know as Caravaggio was born Michelangelo Merisi on the 29th of September (the Feast of St. Michael), 1571, in the rural community of Caravaggio, just east of Milan.[1] Giulio Mancini, in *Alcune considerazioni appartenenti alla pittura* of c. 1617-1621, relates that the artist was the son *"d'assai onorati cittadini, poiche' il padre fu maestro di casa et architetto del duca di Caravaggio"* [Francesco Sforza].[2] Caravaggio, then, seems to have come from a rather well-positioned family; his father, Fermo, owned land near town.

Caravaggio's father died in 1577, and it's probable that his brother Battista became the head of the household. His name appears on the contract of April 6, 1584 apprenticing Caravaggio to the workshop of Simone Peterzano of Bergamo *"a painter of some limited importance in Milan"*, who added *"discipulus Titianus"* to the signature of some of his late works.[3] In what sense "discipulus" is to be understood is unclear.

As Friedlaender notes, *"on the whole very little of his uneven production manifests a vital understanding of any phase of Titian's*

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[1] Cinotti, M., 'Vita del Caravaggio: novita' 1983-1988', "Caravaggio - nuove riflessioni"; *Quaderni di Palazzo Venezia*, v. VI, p. 79. Roma, 1989. The precision of this date has only recently been established.

[2] Ludovici, *Vita del Caravaggio dalle testimonianze del suo tempo*. Milano, 1956, p. 29. Mancini (1558-1630) was a physician by profession and served as the personal physician to Urban VIII. Hibbard (*Caravaggio*. New York, 1983, p. 7) characterizes him as an "unscrupulous dilettante-collector," while Friedlaender (in *Caravaggio Studies*, Princeton, 1974, p. 229) describes him as "a dilettante in matters of art" whose "references to Caravaggio are quite helpful even though, as he says himself, much of his information is based on hearsay and is rather anecdotal." Mahon agreed that Mancini should be classified as a dilettante, but notes that "Mancini was certainly not without genuine artistic feeling. He seems to have been a judge of pictures in the sense of a connoisseur". "Studies in Seicento Art and Theory", *Studies of the Warburg Institute*, v. 16. London, 1947, pp. 229-230.

[3] Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 35.

work," (Figure 1).[4] Hibbard posits that Peterzano may have been in Titian's studio along with El Greco in the 1560's, before Peterzano moved on to Milan where he worked from 1573-1596.[5] If so, then, unlike El Greco, he learned comparatively little.

As a 1580 contract with the Barnabites states, Peterzano was probably a *"pictor non ineruditus"*, and was praised by his friend Lomazzo in the *Idea del tempio della pittura.*[6] In essence, then, Peterzano was probably the kind of competent, if unspectacular, teacher that one would look to engage for a beginning student:

> *"Through a contract with another apprentice before Caravaggio's time we know that Peterzano gave instruction in painting ornament and portraits (dipengere la rabesca e far ritratti), although his main work was in the grand manner. Paintings for organ wings and altarpieces, with many figures in violent movement are preserved to us, and we know of enormous decorations in fresco which he made for the Certosa di Cerignano, a famous sanctuary not far from Milan. In the workshop of this versatile and efficient master the young Merisi certainly had a solid technical education, laying the basis for the painstaking execution which distinguishes most of his later works. A youth leaving the studio of Peterzano ... was surely saturated with practical knowledge in various fields ... ."*[7]

Peterzano's own manner seems to have had little effect upon the painting of Caravaggio. Indeed, many writers feel that Caravaggio may have consciously revolted against his master's approach to the art of painting.[8] Instead, Caravaggio seems to have drawn more from other

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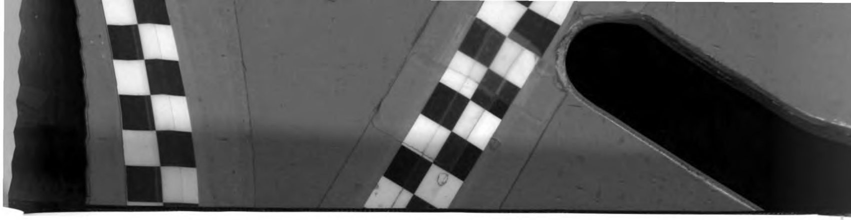
[4] Ibid., p. 36.
[5] Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 3. Maria Teresa Fiorio (Gregori, M., ed., *Age of Caravaggio*. New York, 1985, p. 73) states that while Peterzano's apprenticeship to Titian has been questioned by many, "there is much evidence in its favor: the presence of his works in Venetian collections; contemporary references; and, above all, the style of his first Milanese paintings." She also notes, as does Friedlaender, that contemporary sources referred to him as Simone Veneziano.
[6] Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 35.
[7] Ibid., p. 36.
[8] For example: Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 37; Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 4; and Gregori, "Caravaggio Today" in *The Age of Caravaggio* (Gregori, M., ed.), p. 31.



Lombard masters, such as Antonio Campi, Lorenzo Lotto, Girolamo Savoldo, Moretto da Brescia, and Il Romanino. Friedlaender, for instance, reminds us that Campi's *Visit of the Empress Faustina to St. Catherine in Prison*

> *"was painted in the church of Sant'Angelo virtually before Caravaggio's eyes. ... We can certainly assume that the young painter, apprenticed in a maniera workshop, sided passionately with the modern trend taken up by the Campi. ... He consequently became interested in the revival of the artistic personalities belonging to the generation of his grandfathers, whose ideals of reality and lyrical chiaroscuro contrasted sharply with the inflated emptiness of the Milanese school as represented by Gaudenzio's pupils, Lomazzo, Peterzano, and others. This late sixteenth century revival of the so-called Giorgionesque art of Lotto and Romanino, certainly awakened the strongly anti-manneristic tendencies which we find evidenced in Caravaggio's later works."*[9]

The question as to whether Caravaggio visited Venice and acquired *"il pensiero di Giorgione"* that Federico Zuccari and others have seen in Caravaggio's work has long been debated.[10] Mina Gregori feels *"it is inconceivable that he did not visit Venice, the artistic capital of Northern Italy in the sixteenth century, and the one city able to oppose the supremacy of the artistic traditions of Central Italy with new methods and ideas - - even on a theoretical plane."*[11] Bellori, in fact, claims that Caravaggio did go to Venice, *"ove si compiacque tanto del colorito di Giorgione che se lo propose per iscorta nell'imitazione."*[12] As there is no documentation whatsoever for this visit, it has been often suggested that Bellori fabricated it to explain

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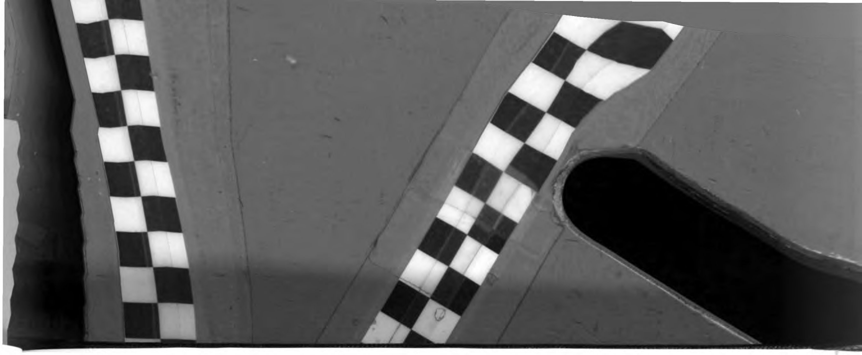
[9] Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 42.

[10] Regarding *The Calling of St. Matthew*, Baglione tells us that "Pur venendovi a vederla Federico Zucchero, mentre io era presente disse: - Che rumore e' questo? - e guardando il tutto diligentemente soggiunse: - Io non ci vedo altro che il pensiero di Giorgione nella tavola del santo, quando Cristo il chiamo' all'apostolato ... ." Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 45.

[11] "Caravaggio Today," in *Age of Caravaggio*, p. 32.

[12] *Le vite*, in Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 55.



the Giorgionesque qualities of some of Caravaggio's early paintings.[13] Moreover, aspects of Giorgione could have been assimilated through the Lombard artists discussed above, or from prints of Giorgione then in circulation.

One should not discount, either, the effect that Leonardo's art may have had upon the apprentice Caravaggio. Richard Spear has written that *"during the last quarter of the* [16th] *century, when Caravaggio was growing up and studying in Milan, Leonardo's legacy unquestionably remained alive, but was frequently reinterpreted by ... artists, such as Peterzano."*[14] One need only recall the general similarities of such works by Leonardo as the *Madonna of the Rocks* or the *St. John* with various works by Caravaggio to see that something of Leonardo is at work.[15] It also should be pointed out that Peterzano's friend Lomazzo seems to have taken much from Leonardo's theories of art.[16] As Luigi Salerno wrote, Caravaggio's realism arose from the Lombard tradition, *"idealmente"* from Leonardo, and directly from painters like Savoldo, Romanino and Moretto.[17]

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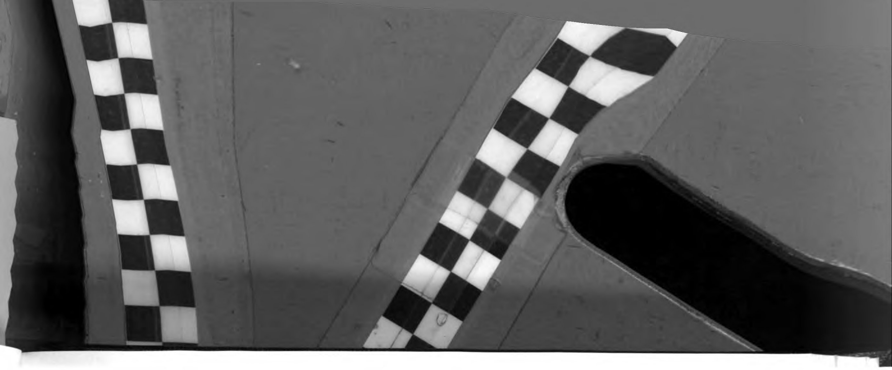
[13] Ludovici is representative: "L'andata a Venezia supposta dal Bellori e' un tentativo di spiegarne deterministicamente la fase giorgionesca." Ibid, p. 119, n. 66.

[14] Spear, R., 'Leonardo, Raphael, and Caravaggio', "Light on the Eternal City: Observations and Discoveries in the Art and Architecture of Rome"; *Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University* (Hager, H. and Munshower, S.S., eds.), v. II, Dexter, 1987, p. 61.

[15] Ibid., p. 60. Spear noted the similarity between the Louvre *St. John* and Caravaggio's *St. John the Baptist.*

[16] "As an apprentice of Peterzano, the friend of Lomazzo, in whose writings the glory of Leonardo had been evoked, he was surely encouraged to develop the deepest respect for the art of the great master." Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 55. Friedlaender, p. 55, quite rightly notes too that Caravaggio could have seen Leonardo's *Last Supper*, or absorbed aspects of Leonardo through Savoldo and Campi.

[17] Salerno, L., "Caravaggio e la cultura del suo tempo", *Novita' sul Caravaggio: Saggi e contributi* (Cinotti, M., ed.). Milano, 1974, p. 18.



The duration of Caravaggio's apprenticeship to Peterzano, and the date of his subsequent departure for Rome, is another troublesome biographical detail. The contract with Peterzano stipulated that Caravaggio was to remain in the master's 'shop *"annos quatuor."*[18] This would have freed Caravaggio from his commitment in 1588. As Gregori observed, however, Caravaggio seems not to have left northern Italy *"before July, 1592, when he is documented in the town of Caravaggio,"* leaving four years unaccounted for.[19] Mancini seems to confirm this lacuna when he reports that Caravaggio *"studio' da fanciulezza per 4 o 6 anni in Milano ... Doppo se ne passo' a Roma."*[20] Cinotti has presented Maurizio Calvesi's new reading of the passage in question as "*7 o 8 anni.*"[21] If this is correct, then Caravaggio would have departed from the north in 1591 or (more likely) 1592 after he received his inheritance.[22]

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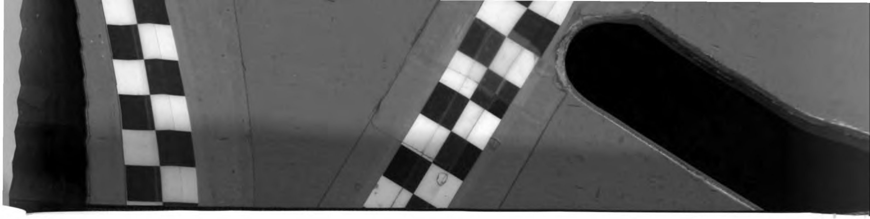
18 Document in Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 267.
19 "Caravaggio Today," in *Age of Caravaggio*, p. 28. Caravaggio's mother (Fermo's second wife) died in Caravaggio in 1590. Some of the family property had already been sold in 1589, and more was dispensed with in 1590-1591. In 1592, a final division of the remaining property was made between Caravaggio, his brother Battista, and his sister Caterina, from which Caravaggio received 393 Imperial pounds (Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 5).
20 *Considerazioni*, in Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 347. The manuscript in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice is generally considered to be the most reliable. Even with this manuscript one encounters various readings. Friedlaender presents the passage as "4 (o 5) anni" as does Ludovici.
21 Cinotti, "... novita' 1983-1988," p. 80. "Ora il Calvesi ha controllato un passo del biografo Mancini, nella versione Marciana di Venezia, e ha potuto accertare che l'esatta lettura non e' 'studio' da fanciullezza per 4 o 6 anni in Milano (...) Doppo se ne passo' a Roma', bensi' 'studio' da fanciullezza per 7 o 8 anni'."
22 Gregori has observed that the new biographical information regarding his birth and apprenticeship "implies a good deal more than has yet been realized ... He was then more than twenty years old [when he left for Rome] - of an age when an artist's apprenticeship should already have been complete." "Caravaggio Today," in *Age of Caravaggio*, p. 28.



The settlement mentioned above makes note of an uncle, a priest by the name of Ludovico, "*formerly of Milan now living in Rome.*"[23] As Caravaggio's brother Battista is known to have been studying moral theology with, interestingly enough, the Jesuits in 1596, it's attractive to imagine the uncle and the two brothers setting off to Rome together.[24] One wonders what the conversations would have been like along the way!

Mancini tells us that Caravaggio arrived in Rome "*d'eta' circa vent'anni,*" which would accord with the new biographical evidence.[25] He further informs us that the artist was in somewhat dire straits and stayed with Pandolfo Pucci da Recanati.[26] Pucci was "*benificiato di S. Pietro*" and for whom Caravaggio "*conveniva andar per la parte ed altri servizii non convenienti all'esser suo, e quel e' peggio se la passava la sera con un'insalata quale li serviva per antipasto, pasto e postpasto ... dopo alcuni mesi partitosi con poca soddisfazione chiamo' poi questo benefiziato suo padrone, monsignor Insalata.*"[27] Pucci, in fact, appears to have had some prominence in Rome,[28] and, as Cinotti

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[23] Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 5.

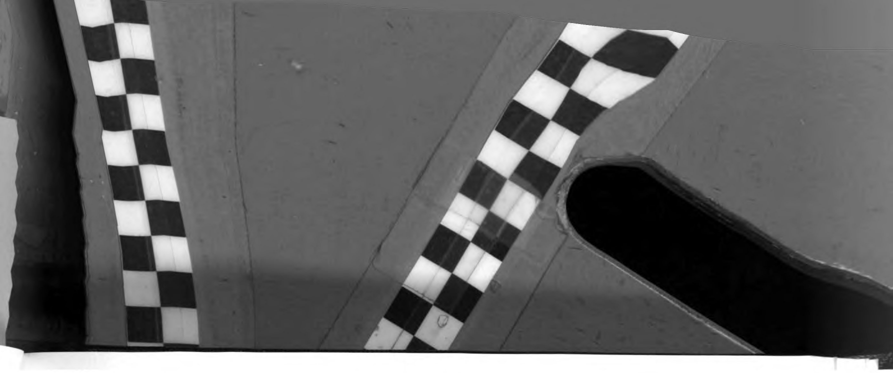
[24] Ibid.

[25] Mancini, in Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 29. Unfortunately, we have no dates associated with the information presented by Caravaggio's biographers regarding his beginnings in Rome. The material does give a good indication of Caravaggio's situation, however.

[26] Caravaggio's lack of resources is noted by most all of his biographers. Baglione adds that at one point, "si ridusse senza danari e pessimamente vestito, si' che alcuni galant'uomini della professione per carita' l'andavano sollevando.". Ludovici, *Vita*, pp. 43-44.

[27] Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[28] Ludovici adds in a note that Pucci was "Avvocato della Curia Romana, membro (1564), poi rettore dell'Accademia Eustachiana, nella quale dove' tenere eleganti discorsi in Latino; benefiziato dell'ospedale di S. Spirito, poi di S. Pietro (1570-1600). Si ritiro' nelle Marche, a Loreto, dove fu nominato arciprete di quel santuario (1605), morendo probabilmente tra il luglio del 1613 e il gennaio del 1614. ... Fu maestro di casa di donna Camilla Peretti, sorella di Sisto V." Ibid, n. 8.



points out, it's interesting that Caravaggio entered early into a circle of private patrons *"d'alto livello, ecclesiastici o gravitanti attorno il clero,"* and infers that Caravaggio's uncle may have been helpful initially.[29] Mancini says that Caravaggio copied some devotional images for Pucci and that these made their way to Recanati.[30]

Baglione reports Caravaggio's beginnings in Rome differently, that *"da principio si accomodo' con un pittore Siciliano, che di opere grossolane tenea bottega."*[31] Somewhere in this very early phase, it appears that Caravaggio became ill and was taken in by the Ospedale della Consolazione for whose prior he painted *"molti quadri."*[32]

Bellori, Mancini and Baglione all agree that Caravaggio became associated, at one point, with Cavaliere d'Arpino. Mancini says that he was told this occurred after Caravaggio's hospitalization.[33] Baglione informs us that he stayed for some months with d'Arpino,[34] and Bellori adds that d'Arpino employed Caravaggio *"a dipinger fiori, e frutti si bene contrafatti, che da lui vennero a frequentarsi a' quella maggior vagezza, che tanto oggi diletta."*[35]

Just as with Peterzano, one wishes that more could be gleaned from the sources about Caravaggio's time with d'Arpino. Friedlaender

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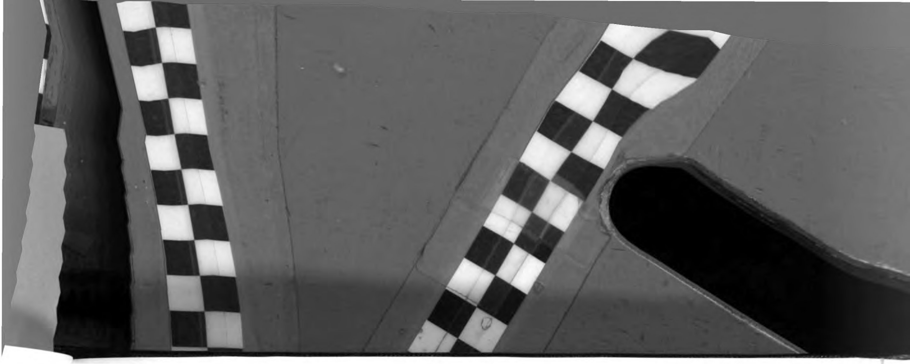
[29] Cinotti, "... novita' 1983-1988," p. 80. Pucci may not fall precisely into the category that Cinotti has defined, yet the general sense of her observation still seems to apply.
[30] In Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 29.
[31] Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572 in fino a' tempi di Papa Urbano VIII nel 1642* (1642), in Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 43. "Bellori wrote in the margin of his copy of Baglione that the painter's name was Lorenzo." Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 8.
[32] Mancini, in Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 30. Friedlaender notes that a plague and famine swept Rome in 1591, and that the Ospedale took care of "inn servants in case of illness." (*Caravaggio Studies*, p. 57)
[33] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 30.
[34] Ibid., p. 43.
[35] Ibid., p. 56.



describes d'Arpino as a *"skillful and by no means tasteless artisan,"* who was considered a leader of the *"ultima maniera."*[36] Mancini notes that he was *"gia' famoso e glorioso al mondo da Clemente VIII che l'amava molto."*[37]

The two artists were certainly different in terms of their styles and station as well as, one supposes, decorum. Almost all of Caravaggio's biographers portray the relationship between the two as strained, at best. Joachim von Sandrart goes so far as to render the 1606 death of Ranuccio Tomassoni in Rome at the hands of Caravaggio as the result of an armed scuffle between Caravaggio and d'Arpino.[38] More telling is the fact that Caravaggio himself included d'Arpino amongst those whom he considered *"valenthuomini": "quella parola 'valenthuomo' appresso di me vuol dire che sappi far bene dell'arte sua."*[39]

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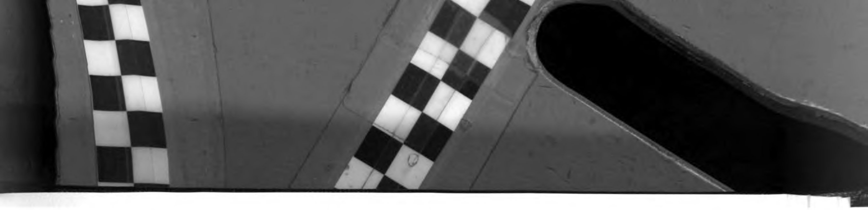
[36] Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, pp. 72-73. Friedlaender, p. 74, also notes, however, that "on the whole, the Cavaliere d'Arpino presents an aspect of efficient mediocrity."

[37] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 79.

[38] Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Bau-Bild-, und Mahlerey-Kunste*, Nurnberg, 1675, in Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 264. Caravaggio's killing of Tomassoni over a tennis match bet is well-known and is well-documented in Friedlaender, Hibbard and elsewhere. Cinotti has collected some of the important new information discovered by Calvesi and S. Macioce which reveals that "Ranuccio apparteneva a una famiglia influente e anche brigosa". One of Ranuccio's brothers, Gian Francesco, for example, "nel 1606 .. aver ferito 'in periculo vitae' un certo Vincenzo Ardillano di Palermo, ma non gli e' inflitta alcuna pena." On the other hand, Caravaggio, as Calvesi has uncovered, seems to have been condemned to death for Ranuccio's murder. "Tale ... era dunque la minaccia che lo aveva fatto fuggire senza tregua ... ." Cinotti, "... novita' 1983-1988," pp. 84-85.

[39] Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 276. Caravaggio does admit, however, that d'Arpino ranks amongst those that "non sono miei amici ... perche' non mi parlano." The text is taken from testimony given by Caravaggio in court in 1603. Baglione had brought a libel suit against Caravaggio, Orazio Gentileschi, Onorio Longhi and Filippo Trisegni for distributing some racy poetry which called his painting abilities into question.



An evaluation of the professional relationship between the two artists is difficult because, again, we are dependent upon the opinions of writers who may have been more intent upon making categorizations. Friedlaender reasons that "*it is not surprising that Caravaggio and Arpino ... should have been on bad terms from the beginning ... . However, the antagonism between them was probably exaggerated by the biographers who were delighted to ornament the real situation with colorful anecdotes. ... The only thing we know for certain about the relationship between the two men is that Caravaggio had worked in Arpino's shop when he was young. Arpino is known to have been a shrewd man in matters of business who, as Bellori says, well knew how to advertise his merchandise ... and it is possible that he exploited the young Caravaggio's talent for painting 'fruits and flowers'.*"[40]

When Caravaggio later received the commission to paint the St. Matthew cycle in the Contarelli Chapel at San Luigi, he must have felt great satisfaction at being handed an opportunity to upstage one of his masters. It was d'Arpino who had received the original commission for the paintings, but he only completed the frescoes of the vaulting; indeed, it is entirely possible that Caravaggio had assisted in the work. The idea of a kind of competition between the two artists, in fact, seems to come out in Baglione who notes that Caravaggio's work, "*per essere in compagnia d'altre fatte dal Cavalier Gioseppe, che con la sua virtu' si aveva presso i suoi professori qualche invidia acquistata, fece gioco alla fama del Caravaggio.*"[41]

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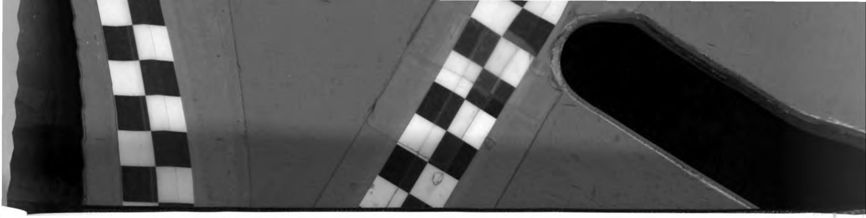
[40] Ibid., p. 73. The relationship seems to bear some resemblance to that of Bernini and Borromini later on.
[41] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 44.



With reference to the "fiori e frutti" mentioned above, Bellori states that Caravaggio had painted *"altri quadri eccellentemente ... di simile imitazione. Ma esercitandosi egli di mala voglia in queste cose, e sentendo gran rammarico di vedersi tolto alle figure, incontro' l'occasione di Prospero pittore di grottesche, ed usci' di casa di Giuseppe, per contrastargli la gloria del pennello.*[42] Mancini relates, instead, that after he left d'Arpino's shop, Caravaggio stayed with Monsignor Fantin Petrignani,[43] while Baglione says that he *"provo' a stare da se stesso, e fece alcuni quadretti da lui nello specchio ritratti."*[44] Where he was living is of less importance than what he was doing, for it was at this point, as Bellori tells us,that Caravaggio began to paint *"according to his own genius."*[45] Caravaggio's fortunes were about to change.

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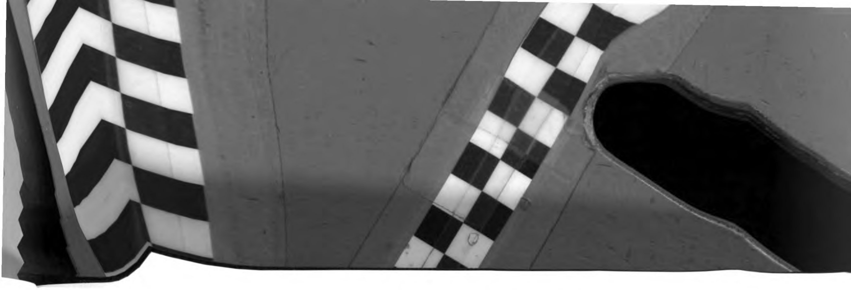
[42] Ibid., p. 56. "Prosperino Orsi, a painter of ornament (grottesche) ... later became one of Caravaggio's greatest advocates, and also an enemy of Arpino." Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 58.
[43] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 30. In a note Ludovici adds that Petrignani was an Umbrian, "chierico della camera apostolica, vice-legato in Viterbo, poi governatore delle Marche e prefetto dell'Emilia, fu creato arcivescovo da Papa Gregorio XIII nel 1577 ed inviato a Cosenza. Mori' nel 1600, lasciando alcuni opuscoli sacri ed inediti." Ibid., n. 13.
[44] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 43.
[45] Ibid. "Datosi percio' egli a colorire, secondo il suo proprio genio ... ."



DEL MONTE I: EXPERIMENTS AND LESSONS RECALLED

Baglione, continuing the account of Caravaggio's state of affairs just noted, tells us of the fortuitous moment: "*infin che maestro Valentino a S. Luigi de' Francesi revenditore di quadri glie ne fece dar via alcuni; e con questa occasione fu conosciuto dal cardinal Del Monte, il quale per dilettarsi assai della pittura se lo prese in casa ed avendo parte e provisione piglio' animo e credito ... .*"[1]

Suddenly, it appears that Del Monte walks into the shop of the dealer Valentino and Caravaggio is on his way - - rescued from oblivion. We have seen how his early situation in Rome was characterized by changing abodes and arrangements. What happened? What did the Cardinal see in Caravaggio's works that moved him to take him in as he did?

Caravaggio's earliest times with Cardinal Del Monte are crucial in understanding his art as a whole. It's apparent that the transformation that takes place in Caravaggio's painting is linked to his association with Del Monte, and blossoms forth stunningly at San Luigi dei Francesi. In Gregori's words, Caravaggio's "*intellectual growth, through a laborious process that has little in common with the normal development of contemporary painters, is doubtlessly linked to his stay with Cardinal Del Monte.*"[2] This stay seems to have begun about 1594 or 1595, with both Baglione and Bellori reporting that the first work executed by Caravaggio for Del Monte was the *Concert of Youths* (Figure 2), now in New York.[3]

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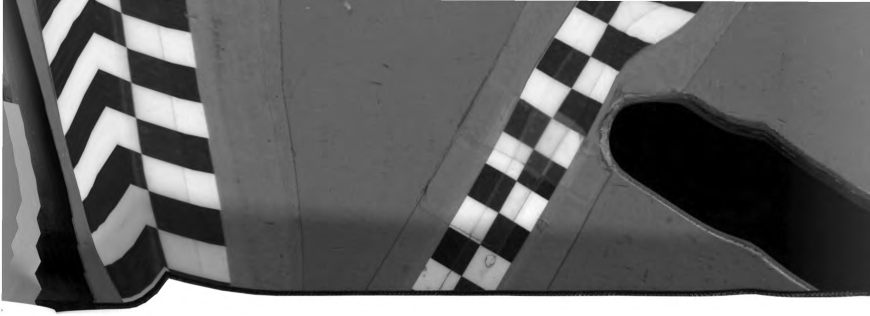
[1] Ludovici, *Vita del Caravaggio dalle testimonianze del suo tempo*. Milano, 1956, p. 44. Bellori tells us that it was *The Cardsharps* (now lost) that Del Monte bought. Ludovici, p. 58.

[2] "Caravaggio Today", *The Age of Caravaggio* (Gregori, M., ed.). New York, 1985, p. 32.

[3] Most scholars agree that this work can be dated 1594-1596.



Baglione describes this work as *"una musica di alcuni giovani ritratti dal naturale,"*[4] while Bellori characterizes it as *"una musica di giovini ritratti dal naturale in mezze figure."*[5] That both writers make a point of, and are in agreement in, describing the painting as "dal naturale" is significant. The problem comes in trying to understand the precise contemporary implication of that aspect. This problem is made acute by the fact that "naturalism" or "realism" became academic pejoratives that we haven't fully shaken off, and which came to be exemplified by the art of Caravaggio.[6] The artist himself didn't help to clarify matters at the Baglione hearing, when he testified that *"un pittore valenthuomo ... sappi depingere bene et imitar bene le cose naturali."*[7] In the words of Ferdinando Bologna: *"Emerge cosi' il problema centrale dell'arte caravaggesca: che cosa esattamente il maestro intendesse per 'natura'."*[8]

Naturalism in Caravaggio's paintings was first written about by Karel Van Mander in 1604, who said that Caravaggio *"holds ... that nothing could be good and nothing done better than to follow Nature. Whence it is that he will not do a single brushstroke without close study from life which he copies and paints. This is surely no bad way of*

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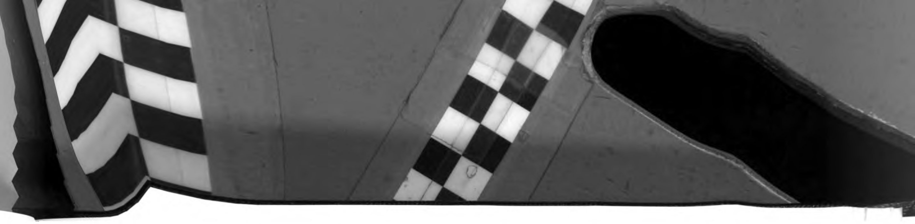
4 Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 44.
5 Ibid., p. 58.
6 This academic prejudice dates back at least as far as Plato, for example: "Suppose, then, that an individual clever enough to assume any character and give imitations of anything and everything should visit our country and offer to perform his compositions, we shall bow down before a being with such miraculous powers of giving pleasure; but we shall tell him that we are not allowed to have any such person in our commonwealth; we shall crown him with fillets of wool, anoint his head with myrrh, and conduct him to the borders of some other country." *Republic*, III, 397 (Cornford, trans., p. 85).
7 Friedlaender, W. , *Caravaggio Studies*. Princeton, 1974, p. 276.
8 Bologna, F., "Il Caravaggio nella cultura e nella societa del suo tempo", *Colloquio sul tema Caravaggio e i Caravaggeschi*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Roma, 1974, p. 170.



achieving a good end: for to paint after drawing, however close it may be to life, is not as good as following Nature with all her various colors."[9]

It was Baglione who made the implication that Caravaggio imitated nature to the exclusion of art's fundamentals and traditions, and that he had *"rovinata la pittura, poiche molti giovani ad esempio di lui si danno ad imitare una testa del naturale, e non studiando ne' fondamenti del disegno e della profundita' dell'arte, solamente del colorito appagansi, onde non sanno mettere due figure insieme, ne' tessere istoria veruna, per non comprendere la bonta' di si nobil'arte."*[10] This appraisal was picked up by Bellori and expanded upon, even by twentieth centuries scholars, until quite recently. As Roberto Longhi wrote in 1951, *"di riprendere pari pari il vocabolo di 'naturalista', gia' usato dal Baglione e dal Bellori, e soltanto privandolo della sua inclinazione spregiativa, non veniva in mente a nessuno."*[11]

From Baglione and Bellori it seems fair to conclude that the *Concert* was the first work commissioned from Caravaggio by Del Monte. Furthermore, Del Monte appears to have been satisfied with the work, as he continued to commission paintings from the artist. Caravaggio's "naturalism" seems to have been a feature noted early in his Roman career, and is clearly documented with regard to the *Concert*. With a great leap of faith, one might infer that it was precisely this aspect of Caravaggio's painting that caught Del Monte's eye, and accorded with his sensibilities.

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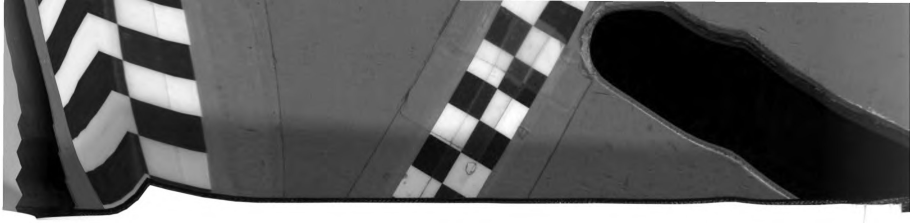
[9] Van Mander, K., *Het Schilderboeck*. Haarlem, 1604. In Hibbard, *Caravaggio*. New York, 1983, p. 344.
[10] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 46.
[11] Longhi, R., *Mostra del Caravaggio e dei caravaggeschi, catalogo, Milano*. Firenze, 1951, XXXI.



As already noted, Caravaggio's art developed substantially during the Del Monte period, becoming more assured, more plastic and more technically proficient.[12] Spezzaferro made the following astute observations regarding the importance of three early Del Monte commissions to this development:

> *"Tra le opere eseguite per il Cardinal Del Monte tre, in particolare, vengono ricordate dalle fonti: il Concerto, ... il Suonatore dell'Ermitage* [Figure 3] *e la Santa Caterina Thyssen. ... Il Baglione ci dice che i giovani sono 'ritratti dal naturale, assai bene' mentre il suonatore di liuto pareva 'vivo e vero' aggiungendo infine che il Caravaggio pensava che questo fosse 'il piu' bel pezzo che facesse mai'. E' da notare infatti che per il Baglione le opere del Merisi ricordate prima sono 'quadretti da lui nello specchio ritratti' mentre e' solo con queste dipinte per il Del Monte, che il Caravaggio ritrarrebbe 'dal naturale' si' da far sembrare il risultato 'vivo e vero'. ... Il Bellori ... ci dice che ... il Suonatore ... e la Santa Caterina ... 'riescono d'un colorito piu' tinto, cominciando gia' Michele ad ingagliardire gli oscuri'. Facendosi cosi' piu' esplicamente capire quanto gia' ci aveva suggerito il Baglione: che cioe' il mutamento stilistico di Caravaggio va collegato con le opere a lui commissionate dal Del Monte e che tale mutamento consiste in un nuovo uso della luce nella costruzione della figura e della spazialita' del quadro."*[13]

Caravaggio's signature lighting effect, and its possible meaning, has received much attention over the years. What has been overlooked is

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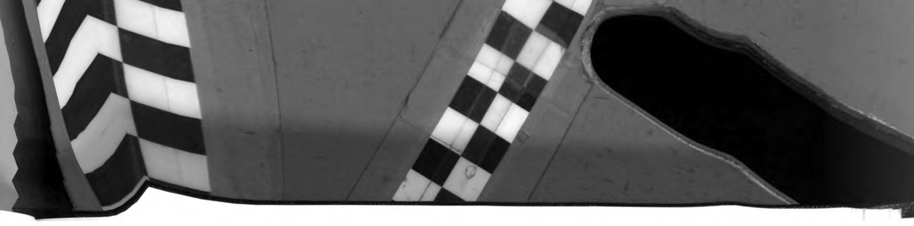
[12] The Del Monte period dates from about 1594/95 to 1600/01. Caravaggio was still living in the Del Monte household in November of 1600 (Gregori, *Age of Caravaggio*, p. 198).

[13] Spezzaferro, L., "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte e il primo tempo del Caravaggio," *Storia dell'arte*, 9-10 (1974), 57. These, of course, are not the only works executed by Caravaggio for Del Monte. They do, however, illustrate well the "mutamento" taking place. "Le opere del Merisi presenti nella collezione Del Monte si possono, a mio avviso, identificare, anche in base alle misure, con i *Bari* ex Sciarra, la *Zingara* Louvre, il *S. Giovanni Battista* capitolino, la *Santa Caterina* Thyssen, il *S. Francesco in estasi* di Hartford, il *Concerto* di New York, il *Suonatore* dell'Ermitage. ... 'Un quadretto nel quale vi e' una caraffa di mano del Caravaggio ...', per il momento inidentificabile, nonche' due copie di originali caravaggeschi, e cioe': un *S. Matteo* e un'*Incredulita' di S. Tommaso*. Sappiamo infine dalle fonti che il Caravaggio fece per il Del Monte la *Medusa* degli Uffizi ... e forse il soffito del casino Ludovisi gia' Del Monte." Ibid., 84. The assessment is based upon an inventory of 1627.



precisely what Spezzaferro noted above. In the early Del Monte works Caravaggio seems to be experimenting with light, not so much in the traditional way of modelling figures, but also as a way of defining space. Light becomes more than illumination, it becomes a necessity: it is through light that one is able to perceive space (a mentally-defined construct) and the objects within it. In a sense space exists because of light as do the objects within it.

As was noted earlier, much of Caravaggio's elusive realism is derived from Lombard sources. Moshe Barasch writes that *"apart from the general heritage of art and art theory ... two particular sources - - the northern and north Italian tradition of symbolism , and the significance given to expression in the Counter-Reformation - - were probably the most important factors in shaping the Lombard concepts of art. They were also important in the emergence of new concepts of color and light."* [14] Moreover, Barasch notes that *"Lombard theory of art, especially of painting, is to a large extent dominated by a single figure, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo"*, Peterzano's friend.[15] Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura* was published in Milan in 1584, the same year that Caravaggio was apprenticed to Peterzano.

Lomazzo presents an interesting case in that, unlike most other theoreticians (particularly in Milan), he was a trained painter and worked as one before he went blind at the age of thirty-three. *"He not only had an intimate knowledge of many works of art and of the artistic traditions of both Italy and northern Europe, but he also knew the*

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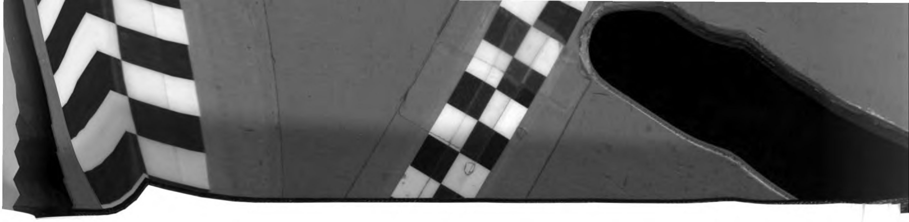
14 Barasch, M., *Light and Color in the Italian Renaissance Theory of Light*. New York, 1978, p. 138.
15 Ibid.



different aspects, technical as well as psychological, of the painter's work. It is, of course, true that he was deeply influenced by the broad philosophical trends of the period, but he was never completely detached from the artistic work. ... Lomazzo's work constitutes the single extensive attempt to be undertaken in late sixteenth century Milan to assimilate new cultural forces and trends for incorporation in his theory of art."[16]

Barasch notes that although only two of the seven aspects of Lomazzo's theory of painting deal specifically with color and light, it is apparent that he held these two in the greatest regard. Moreover, as opposed to Venetian theorists, he considered them to be exclusive of each other: "*In a polemical remark directed against the 'filosofi peripatetici' who believe in the unity of light and color,* [Lomazzo] *says that the rays of the sun or of any other light 'do not produce or generate the colors' but merely illumine, and thereby reveal, the colors already existent in the bodies. ... In describing the stages of the production of a painting he says that 'the picture is already proportioned, it has movement, it has color,' and now it only has to be illumined.*"[17]

Book four of the *Trattato*, the "Book of Lights" is given over almost exclusively to the matter of light. Much of it is not entirely original and, as the anti-Aristotelian remark above would indicate, it owes much to Neo-Platonism, particularly that of Marsilio Ficino. The initial portions of the "Book of Lights" discuss what Barasch calls the traditional "functional" aspects of light for a painter. Along the way,

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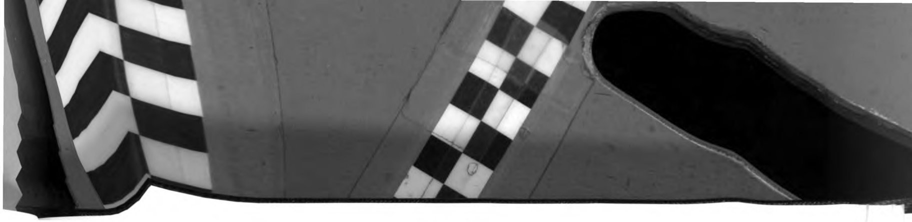
16 Ibid., p. 139.
17 Ibid., p. 140.



Lomazzo cites a number of painters adept at utilizing light: Leonardo, Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, Veronese and the Bassani. Barasch notes that the "*highest praise of all is bestowed upon Correggio, described as a painter whom nobody equals in the representation of light and in the use of color. Lomazzo refers to two paintings by Correggio which he saw in the house of Leone Aretino, a Juno and Jupiter on a Cloud, and a Danae and Jupiter with a Cupid.*"[18] More interesting is the fact that Lomazzo describes Correggio's *Nativity* - - a work that might be described as Proto-Caravaggesque - - as "*tra le opere di pittura una delle singolari che siano al mondo.*"[19]

It is apparent that the way these painters discussed by Lomazzo employ light, and most particularly Correggio, goes beyond that of a mere means of production. In these works, light is used expressively and often symbolically. Lomazzo, indeed, gives confirmation of his belief that light can have a second quality to it. His definition of light from the *Trattato* as translated by Barasch is worth quoting at length:

> "*This word 'light' has different modes and meanings. First, and foremost, it signifies the image of the divine mind, which is the Son of God, and his unique splendor whom the ancients called the image of the divine mind. It signifies, further, the ardour of the Holy Spirit. It is perceived by means of a divine virtue, diffused among creatures, which in the rational* [here Barasch inserts 'creature'] *is his divine grace, and among all the creatures together it is the preserving and defending virtue, as, according to Dionysius, is that of the Seraphims. With the angels it becomes then specifically intelligence and a pleasure exceeding all our thoughts, but it is differently perceived according to the nature of the intelligence which perceives it and in which, as Ficino says of Plato, it is reflected. Descending afterwards from the celestial bodies, where it becomes a copy of life, it is an*

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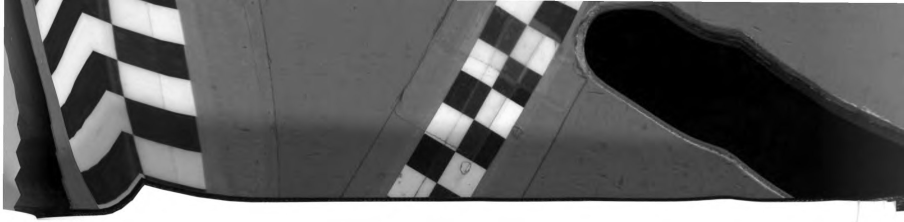
[18] Ibid., p. 142. In a note (24), Barasch points out that Correggio is not mentioned in other Lombard treatises, and that Vasari did not address these particular works.
[19] *Trattato*, I, in Barasch, ibid.



> *efficient propagation and a visible splendor in the fire and a certain vigour and accidence proceeding from its nature. Men, finally, perceive it by the active intelligence which illumines the existing or the possible; and in sum* [Barasch adds, 'it is perceived'] *by a lucid discourse of reason, and a cognition of divine things. It is perceived ultimately by a quality proceeding from the sun or from fire which reveals color.*"[20]

Although Lomazzo's definition itself may not be a "lucid discourse," the Neo-Platonic tenor of the work (through Ficino but ultimately derived from Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" in *Republic* XXV and other works such as the *Symposium*), is explicit. Moreover, although such Neo-Platonic elements had been a mainstay of medieval and Renaissance thought, Lomazzo is the first to introduce the symbolic significance of the properties of light into a treatise dealing specifically with art. *"He thereby not only articulated a revolutionary turn in the development of the theory of art but also, more specifically, showed that light had lost its clearly limited and precise meaning in art.*"[21] Lomazzo, like Correggio, was opening a door for Baroque painting.

A close reading of Lomazzo's theory of light as sketched out above reveals that he is working outside (and beyond) the structure of light that was employed during the Renaissance.[22] He developed two systems which, curiously, overlap:

1) Primary and Secondary Light
2) Direct, Reflected and Refracted Light.

In the first system, primary light is defined by Lomazzo as *"the light that touches these parts of the illumined body which are directly*

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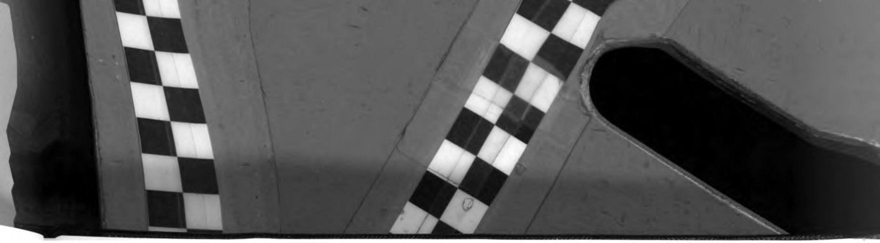
[20] *Trattato,* I, in Barasch, ibid., p. 143.
[21] Barasch, *Light and Color,* p. 144.
[22] Lomazzo, it should be noted, quotes from Alberti at times and seems to have been familiar with Leonardo's treatises on light which were available in manuscript form in Milan. Ibid., p. 145.



opposed to the illuminating body and which are reached by straight lines."[23] Primary light, furthermore, has three subdivisions:

a) Full sunlight[24]

b) The light of a clouded day, also divine light

c) Artificial light.

Secondary light is simply reflected light.

In the second system, direct light is equivalent to primary light, while reflected and refracted light is equivalent to secondary light in the first system. The question is why would one want to create two such seemingly similar systems?

Barasch posits that while the differences between the two systems are of little consequence optically, they are of considerable importance to the painter. *"To optical science it does not matter whether the rays emerge from the sun, from a divine appearance, or from a burning torch, so long as they reach the illumined objects directly and in a straight line. For the painter, however, the iconographic meaning of the light and the specific mood it conveys becomes of decisive importance."*[25] Lomazzo is fully cognizant of the subtle fact that a painter doesn't illuminate his paintings with actual light but with a painted representation of light which has properties and values different from the real thing.

Much of Lomazzo's discussion regarding painted illumination centers around practical workshop advice. His "first primary light," *lume naturale*, is comprehensible enough and Lomazzo recommends that the

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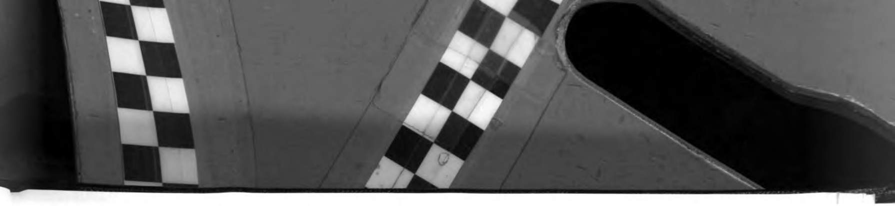
23 Ibid., p. 148.
24 As Barasch notes (Ibid., n. 48), this is equivalent to Leonardo's specific light.
25 Ibid., p. 152.



painter should have the light come from above, so that *"in this way the figures are of a perfect relief and appear round,"* but warns not to place it perpendicularly, thus avoiding confusing, possibly grotesque, shadow effects.[26] The first primary light's specific function then, according to Barasch, is *"to reveal the figures clearly and distinctly, without itself appearing as a factor in the painting."*[27] The first primary light is to act just as natural lighting does and be perceived as being unobtrusive, even though it must be deliberately added by the artist.

The second primary light ("b", above) is a bit more puzzling being both the natural light one perceives on a cloudy day, and *lume divino* -- *"the splendor surrounding angels and holy figures."*[28] What's interesting here is that Lomazzo gives no fixed definition; instead he lists religious themes requiring the use of the second primary light[29] and refers to specific paintings including Titian's *Divinita'*, Correggio's *Nativity*, and Raphael's *Transfiguration.*[30] Barasch's explanation of how "lume divino" can be equated with the light of a cloudy day is not entirely satisfying. *"The light of religious visions,"* he writes, *"being nonrational, cannot be measured. In*

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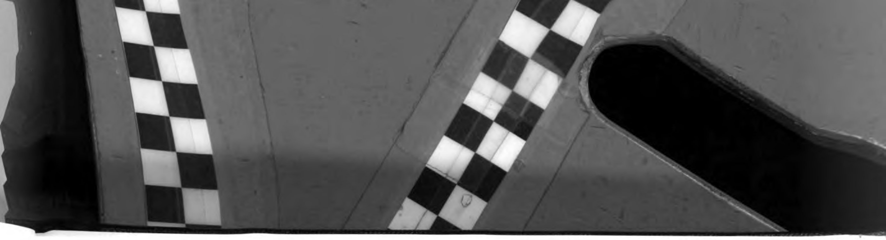
[26] *Trattato*, I, ibid., p. 149. Lomazzo notes that ancient temple lighting came from above (as at the Pantheon, perhaps) so as to render the gods more beautiful, and that "good moderns" follow that example. He also chides the mannerist trend of "di sotto in su'" lighting. Bellori reported that Caravaggio used "un lume alto che scendeva a piombo sopra la parte principale del corpo e lasciando il rimanente in ombra a fine di recar forza con veemenza di chiaro e di scuro." Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 58. "A piombo" must surely be an exaggeration as the evidence is otherwise.

[27] Barasch, *Light and Color*, p. 149.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Old and New Testament.

[30] Barasch notes (Ibid, n. 56) that in the late sixteenth century these paintings were regarded as "a climax in the representation of mysterious light symbolizing divine radiance."



medieval and Renaissance metaphysics, 'lume divino' would not be compared with the light of an ordinary cloudy day, nor would its brilliance be measured; it would certainly not be found inferior to regular sunlight; thus religious and symbolic literature could not have provided Lomazzo's sources. Only in actual paintings could he have observed the particular degree of brightness of 'divine light' and compared it with the intensity of other types; hence it seems probable that he adduced this specific category from looking at paintings."[31]

While Barasch is essentially correct, he seems to have forgotten his own point that one has to constantly keep in mind that Lomazzo, especially with regard to his first system, is primarily concerned with the lighting effects of paint. Lomazzo, as Barasch rightly points out, has defined this second primary light in terms of paint since it is only in paintings that divine light is likely to appear. Lomazzo's first concern, however, was that the forms within a painting should be revealed clearly. If one were to give divine light its proper due - - and one need only refer to the experiences of St. Ignatius or the story of the conversion of St. Paul - - it would so overwhelm form as to render it in the painted medium invisible or nearly so. Therefore, simply for comprehensibility in the painted form, divine light must be something less than the natural light. Lomazzo's equating of divine light with that of a cloudy day is interesting in one respect; namely that on cloudy, sunlit days, breaks in the cloud cover do produce those spectacular shafts of light, which then connect our world with the

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[31] Ibid., pp. 150-151.

heavens above.[32] Even if one concedes all this to Lomazzo, this part of his system doesn't work very neatly and is a minor defect in his otherwise cogent system.

It is inconceivable that Caravaggio did not know of Lomazzo's theories; indeed one might imagine Peterzano and Lomazzo discussing various aspects in Caravaggio's presence in Peterzano's workshop. All the aspects that would appeal to Caravaggio and show up in his work appear to be present: discussions of color and light, references to Venetian artists, to Correggio, Raphael and Leonardo, and to "good moderns" who avoid the mistakes of the Mannerists. Other aspects come to our attention as well.

Carlo Bertelli relates how Lomazzo proposed that *"following perspective illumination, painting imitates the nature of bodies to the point that it represents not only their magnitude and relief, but also their 'moti' and so makes clearly visible the affections and passions of the spirit."*[33]

Bertelli also wrote that Lomazzo's attention to natural light effects and to psychology *"may have influenced Caravaggio, and it is fascinating to read in Gli sogni a dialogue between Leonardo and Phidias in which Leonardo, having confessed that in painting the Last Supper he was subjected to the wishes of the patron, declares that in more favorable conditions he would have painted the apostles as fierce men with suntanned faces and dusty feet."*[34] It's clear that the ideas of

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[32] It's worth recalling, too, Leonardo's fascinating sketches of clouded valleys and the effects of light and storm. Lomazzo's second primary light also seems to correspond to Leonardo's "diffuse light."

[33] Bertelli, C., "Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo", *Age of Caravaggio* (Gregori, M., ed.), p. 60.

[34] Ibid. The manuscript of Lomazzo's *Gli sogni e raggionamente ... con le figure ... da egli dessignate* is now in the British Museum. Bertelli

Lomazzo, however they may have been presented, may have contributed much to the formation of Caravaggio's unique style. They also allow us to return to the central problem of his use of light and his intentions regarding nature.

Earlier, it was stated that Caravaggio's painting changes under his patronage by Del Monte. These changes, typified in the *Concert*, the *Luteplayer* and the Thyssen *St. Catherine*, were noted by both Baglione and Bellori in contemporary sources and characterized by Spezzaferro as "un nuovo uso della luce nella construzione della figura e della spazialita' del quadro."

Looking at the *Concert*, one can't help but be struck by its crowded, claustrophobic composition (Figure 2). Friedlaender commented that there had been speculation that the *Concert* was *"a kind of pasticcio or collaborative work."*[35] Spezzaferro remarked that Caravaggio *"sembra tendere qui ad organizzare in un discorso unitario lo spazio individuato dalle singole figure."*[36] Indeed, if one considers a combination of the two positions just stated, the work does become a kind of pastische with each figure tied to and composed within its own

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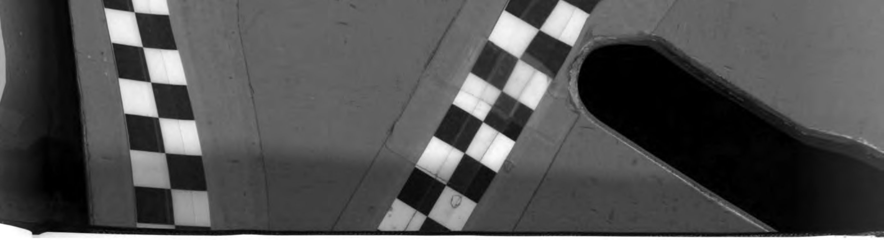
also relates how a medal of Lomazzo cast in Milan shows him "dressed in a tunic that leaves his right shoulder bare while on the right is a very conspicuous knot. In Classical archaeology, the dress would be described as typical of the Cynic philosopher. ...The same dress appears in the *Bacchino Malato* and the *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*." Ibid., p. 62. A similar garment appears in the Uffizi *Bacchus*, of which Hibbard (*Caravaggio*, p. 42) notes that "Lomazzo ... states that the ancients showed Bacchus as bisexual, with a garland on his head, and that he should be a beautiful youth but empty-headed.".

[35] Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 148.

[36] Spezzaferro, "La cultura del Cardinal Del Monte ...," 85. Spezzaferro also connects this with earlier half-figure works in which Caravaggio investigates "come una figura possa costruire uno spazio attorno a se'." Gregori has observed that "the compositions of half-length figures and their related themes were a novelty in Rome." "Caravaggio Today," *Age of Caravaggio*, p. 32.



space but only tenuously related to the others. It's almost as if Caravaggio painted only a single figure at a time, lavishing his entire attention upon it as one would an isolated portrait. In addition, the perspective of the lute is disturbing and one wonders how the youth is managing to tune it.

Clearly, Caravaggio is uncomfortable with this composition which, as opposed to the earlier half-figure compositions, <u>is</u> crowded and complicated.[37] Given the complexity and the problems evidenced in Caravaggio's execution, one might assume that this was a work defined more by Del Monte than by Caravaggio. In trying to find his way in unfamiliar territory, Caravaggio seems to react as any student would and refers back to his old workshop text and practices.[38]

In contemporary sources, much is made of the fact that Caravaggio seemed to have relied upon models, especially early in his Roman period. In an unfamiliar endeavor such as the *Concert* seems to have been, it shouldn't surprise one to find Caravaggio resorting to live models, perhaps painting them one at a time in order to compose a group "on the cheap."[39] This would explain the curious pastische quality, but not the lighting which is rather harsh in comparison to other early works.[40] In fact, the lighting recalls much of Lomazzo's "first primary light"

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[37] Gregori, *Age of Caravaggio*, p. 233, has written that "in the *Musicians* we find ... an evident difficulty in composing the group of figures, as well as a relationship to the early half-length compositions.".

[38] An analagous situation holds in the San Luigi *Martyrdom* where x-rays reveal that Caravaggio first had recourse to quotations from Raphael and others in dealing with a complicated *istoria* for the first time.

[39] It may even be possible that only two models were actually used here.

[40] Earlier half-figures such as the *Bacchino Malato*, and the *Fruttaiuolo* are far darker and muted. Muted also is the *Buona Ventura* and even the Uffizi *Bacchus*, which is often characterized as being very starkly illuminated.

and his practical advice to reveal the figures clearly utilizing light, yet keeping the light itself unobtrusive. It's interesting also that *"Lomazzo revived an old and rather artificial workshop precept by advising painters to illuminate their figures in the middle,"* a tendency which appears here and which may contribute further to the artificial quality of the piece.[41] Caravaggio's *Concert*, therefore, might be characterized as one in which Caravaggio wanted to do new things but, not knowing how to accomplish them (or perhaps thinking that he did), turned towards old conventions or recalled an apprentice's way of solving problems.

As we have seen, the composition as a whole is rather stilted, unsatisfying, and not at all "dal naturale." However, both Baglione and Bellori referred to the *Concert* as having "ritratti dal naturale,"[42] an assessment one cannot argue against. Moreover, the comment by Baglione that Caravaggio had ruined painting and that his followers couldn't put two figures together becomes understandable in light of the *Concert*, which despite the insistence upon working from nature, lacks the conviction of more academic pieces. One wonders, therefore, if Baglione specifically had this painting in mind since the accuracy of the remark certainly does not hold up for Caravaggio's work as a whole.

With the *Lute-Player* another change takes place, which Baglione seems to notice as well. The player of the lute is not seen as "dal naturale" but "vivo e vero."[43] It is to a discussion of this change that we must next turn.

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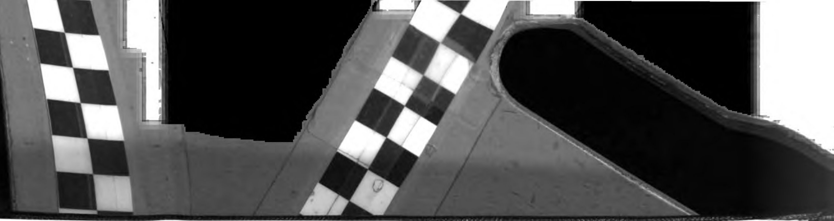
[41] Barasch, *Light and Color*, p. 149.
[42] See p. 17 and notes 4 and 5 above.
[43] Page 19 and n. 13 above.



DEL MONTE II: TOWARDS A MATURE STYLE

The shift in meaning from "dal naturale" to "vivo e vero" is subtle. Baglione seems to be leaving behind naturalism - - the way things look or appear - - and approaching a description of something more like realism - - the way things are.[1] The shift is one from the qualitative to the quantitative, and has a parallel in the philosophical and scientific thought of the time. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), writing slightly later, eloquently stated the new direction of philosophical inquiry: *"Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes - - I mean the universe - - but we cannot grasp it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth."*[2] Although this fragment from Galileo might lead one to believe that Galileo was a Neo-Pythagorean, the thrust of the message is that nature, and to some extent experience, can be measured quantitatively and, therefore, reproduced secondarily.[3]

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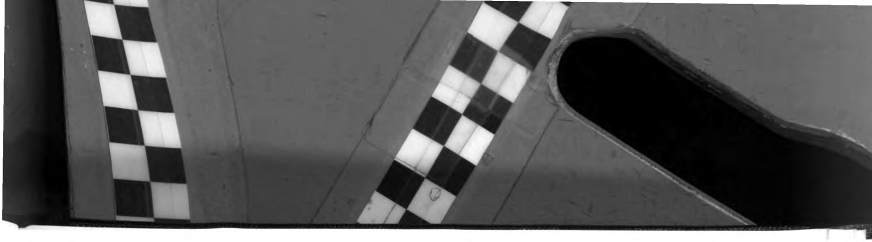
[1] Things become problematic when dealing with images because, no matter what, we are dealing not with reality but with a representation of reality. The difficulty one has in defining, in artistic terms, the difference between naturalism and realism may be rooted in this distinction.

[2] *Opere Complete di Galileo Galilei*, Firenze, 1842, IV, 171, in Burtt, E.A., *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, London, 1949, p. 64. Galileo's under-acknowledged greatness as a writer is one of the supreme oversights in the history of literature.

[3] "... in Galileo la passione per la matematica non andra' mai disgiunta dall'interesse per l'osservazione, la misura e il disegno: la matematica gli apparira' cioe', fin dall'inizio, come un potentissimo strumento per conoscere la natura, per coglierne i segreti piu' intimi, per tradurre i processi naturali in discorsi precisi, coerenti, rigorosamente verificabili." Geymonat, L., *Galileo Galilei*. Torino, 1957, p. 16.



Caravaggio stated that "un pittore valenthuomo ... sappi depingere bene et imitar bene le cose naturali."[4] Caravaggio's use of the conjunction is revealing. Caravaggio seems to say that being able to imitate things, despite what his contemporary critics would lead one to believe, is not enough. One must also know how to paint - - there is an element of art involved in imitating things.[5] But where does one element stop and the other begin?

The very same problem may well have posed itself to Caravaggio as he worked through the *Concert* (Figure 2). He too must have been puzzled by the result which, although apparently taken directly from life, came out flat and artificial. Something was missing, something that when added would produce an image "vivo e vero."

Hibbard noted that

> *"the form and to some extent the content of the Concert are matured and concentrated in a masterpiece of Caravaggio's early period, the Luteplayer, which was probably painted about 1596. It is a fully realized Del Montean production. The lutenist sits behind a table, which affords a realistic space that Caravaggio had not achieved in the Concert. Moreover, we seem to see the corner of a room, perhaps for the first time in his paintings. The lutenist represents a considerable technical advance in figure painting over the earliest works. The light from above, visible on the wall at the upper right, strikes both the figure and the flowers, which are thus set in believeable relief against the dark background."*[6]

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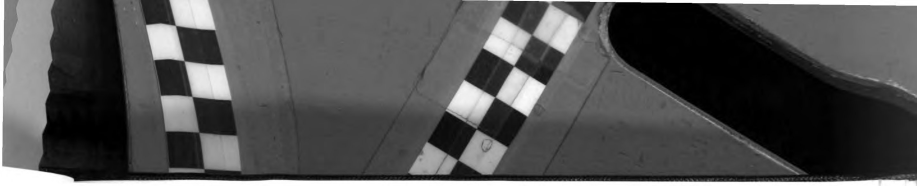
4 See page 17 and n. 7 above.

5 Vincenzo Giustiniani, a well-known collector and an early patron of Caravaggio, placed Caravaggio, Guido Reni and Annibale Carracci in the category of those practising "il piu' perfetto [modo] di tutti ... cioe' dipingere di maniera, e con l'esempio avanti del naturale ... ." Giustiniani, V., (Banti, A., ed.) *Discorsi sulle arti e sui mestieri.* Firenze, 1981 (Reprint), p. 44.

6 Hibbard, H., *Caravaggio.* New York, 1983, p. 35.



Bellori, it should be noted, reported that the *Luteplayer* was one of two works executed by Caravaggio when he was beginning "ad ingagliardire gli oscuri."[7]

Spezzaferro notes that the *"punto d'arrivo"* presented by the *Luteplayer* consists *"proprio nella raggiunta capacita‘, da parte del Caravaggio, di dare una propria realta‘ spaziale all'imagine: realta‘ che sempre piu‘ esiste perche‘, sempre piu‘, e* [e‘?] *rilevata dalla luce."*[8] Spezzaferro also wrote that *"... l'articolazione della composizione ... viene individuata proprio dal fattore luce che da‘ realta‘ spaziale al vuoto ... ."*[9] It would appear, therefore, that what advances the *Luteplayer* to "vivo e vero" is "space", or more precisely the giving of "realta‘ spaziale al vuoto," as defined by a new use of light.[10] The problem of "space" and of "void" was taken quite seriously by philosophers of the time, particularly the "philosophers of nature."

Paul Oscar Kristeller wrote that the

> *"Renaissance philosophers of nature ... are considered a group by themselves, different from the humanists, Platonists, and Aristotelians ... . The label suggests that the central interest of these men was in natural philosophy and cosmology, as that of the early humanist thinkers had been in ethics. Yet what distinguished the philosophers of nature from the Platonists and Aristotelians of their time, or of preceeding generations, was not*

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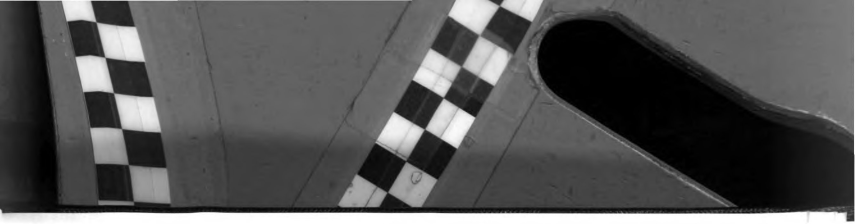
[7] Ludovici, S.S. *Vita del Caravaggio dalle testimonianze del suo tempo.* Milano, 1956, p. 58. The other work was the Thyssen *Saint Catherine.* See p. 19 above.

[8] Spezzaferro, L., "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte e il primo tempo del Caravaggio," *Storia dell'arte,* 9-10 (1974), 86. Spezzaferro attempts also to attach this greater spatial reality to the *Fortune Teller* and the lost *Cardsharps,* which is known only through a copy. The visual evidence does not seem to support this view, nor does the reporting of Baglione who clearly sees something new in the *Luteplayer,* as does Bellori.

[9] Ibid. Spezzaferro was referring to the *Cardsharps* but, as noted above, the observation also applies to the *Luteplayer,* which is a subject of his discussion.

[10] In the quotation presented above, Hibbard seems to have come to the same conclusion.



> *so much the broad subject matter of their thought as their endeavor and claim to explore the principles of nature in an original and independent way, rather than within the framework of an established tradition and authority. They tried to free themselves from the ancient philosophical authorities, especially from Aristotle, who had dominated philosophical speculation, and in particular natural philosophy, for the past several centuries."*[11]

Kristeller also noted that these *"new philosophers of nature were not so original or so independent of ancient authorities as they claimed to be, just as the professed Platonists or Aristotelians, for that matter, were not such faithful followers of their ancient authorities as they believed themselves to be."*[12] More important was their attitude -- an asserted independence -- which, combined with their own particular theories, has led the philosophers of nature to be hailed as the *"forerunners of modern philosophy and science."*[13]

The attitude of these philosophers has a Caravaggesque ring reminiscent of Bellori's report:

> *"Datosi percio' egli* [Caravaggio] *a colorire secondo il suo proprio genio, non riguardando punto anzi spregiando gli eccellentissimi marmi de gli antichi e le pitture tanto celebri di Raffaelle, si propose la sola natura per oggetto del suo pennello. Laonde essendogli mostrate le statue piu' famose di Fidia e Glicone accioche' vi accommodasse lo studio, non diede altra risposta se non che distese la mano verso una moltitudine di uomini, accennando che la natura l'aveva a sufficienza proveduto di maestri."*[14]

Bernardino Telesio (1509-1588) is considered to be the earliest of the philosophers of nature who had an impact upon later thought. He was born in Cosenza, educated in Milan and Rome and studied philosophy and mathematics at the University of Padua, obtaining a doctorate in 1535.

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[11] Kristeller, P.O., *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance.* Stanford, 1964, p. 95. Kristeller's insightful works are indispensible in dealing with the neglected subject of Italian Renaissance philosophy.
[12] Kristeller, 1964, pp. 95-96. A similar relationship again holds with Caravaggio and art.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 56.

In 1565 he published in Naples the first edition of his best known work, *De rerum natura iuxta propria natura.*[15] He spent the later years of his life back in Cosenza where he founded the Accademia Cosentina, which was given to the study of natural philosophy. Telesio's writings and the work of his Academy earned the attention and respect of many of his contemporaries. Francesco Patrizi and Francis Bacon were among those who were drawn towards his work,[16] as was Tommaso Campanella who sought out Telesio himself.[17]

In the preface of *De rerum natura*, Telesio leaves no doubt of his intent by immediately rejecting accepted aspects of Aristotle's *Physics*,[18] which he claims are *"in conflict with the senses, with itself, and with Scripture."*[19] He asserts that his theories, by contrast, are free of such errors, and have been developed entirely through sensory perception and the observation of nature, an attitude

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[15] A much-enlarged third and final edition was published in 1586, which is the standard text.

[16] Bacon called him the "first of the moderns." Kristeller, 1964, p. 105.

[17] Ibid., pp. 106-107. "Nel 1588 trovandosi [Campanella] a Cosenza per seguire il corso di teologia presso lo Studio generale della Provincia domenicana della Calabria, proprio nei giorni in cui si spegnava Telesio, egli, che sperava di poter incontrare il filosofo, aveva potuto solo fermarsi in raccoglimento davanti alla sua salma, deponendovi accanto un'accorata elegia. Forse proprio un acceso entusiasmo per la filosofia telesiana gli procuro' la deplorazione dei superiori e forse per questa stessa ragione fu confinato nel piccolo convento di Altomonte." Rossi, R., "La diffusione delle dottrine telesiane nell'Italia meridionale far concensi e polemiche", *Bernardino Telesio e l'idea di natura 'iuxta propria principia'* (Romano, F., ed.). Roma, 1989, p. 91.

[18] Specifically, Book II. Aristotle "habitually identifies nature as power of movement with nature as form. The form or mode of structure of a thing - e.g. of an animal - is just that by virtue of which it moves, grows, and alters, and comes to rest when it has reached the terminus of its movement. And conversely the power to move, grow and alter in a certain definite way is just the form or character of each thing." Ross, W.D., *Aristotle*. London, 1953, p. 68. Aristotle's nature, therefore, is dynamic and teleological.

[19] Kristeller, 1964, p. 98.

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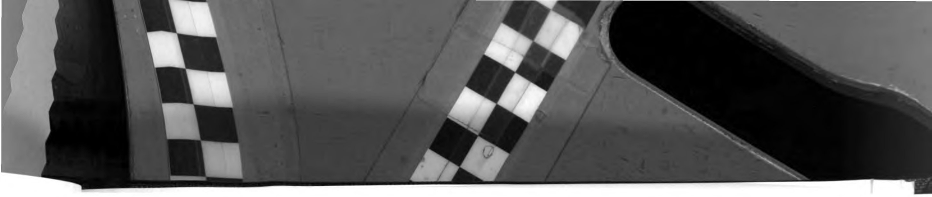

similar to that attributed to Caravaggio by his biographers.[20] Kristeller notes, however, that Telesio "*is willing to subordinate even the testimony of the senses to the authority of Scripture and the Catholic Church.*"[21]

The end of *De rerum's* Book One is given to a discussion of space and time. Aristotle's then-accepted definition of space had come from *Physics* IV, 4, where he states that "*topos ... is the boundary of the containing body at which it is in contact with the contained body.*"[22] An empty space, therefore, is impossible. Telesio posits, instead, that an empty space can exist and he defines space, in Kristeller's words, as "*something that is capable of containing bodies, and distinct from the bodies which it contains (I, 25). This space is without motion,*

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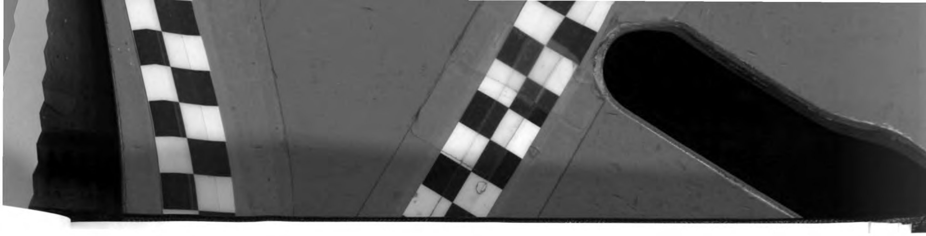
[20] One part of Telesio's interesting theory of knowledge, which is beyond the scope of this work, states that human knowledge is based on perception and the similarity or differences seen in those objects of perception. Kristeller, 1964, p. 100.

[21] Ibid., p. 98. Telesio's *De rerum* was placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1596. To modern eyes Telesio's intent may look like a failed ploy to avert trouble. In fact, at the time it may have been viewed entirely differently. St. Augustine, for example, is "willing to use scientific discoveries and speculations when they contribute to his main ... purpose. He believes it a mistake to adhere to any physical theory tenaciously (so that, if it turns out to be a mistake, the faith will not be held up to derision by its opponents)." Weinberg, J., *A Short History of Medieval Philosophy.* Princeton, 1974, p. 32. Galileo, similarly, in his 1615 *Letter to the Grand Duke Christina,* regarding a proposed Copernican interpretation of the miracle of Joshua, sought to protect the Church from committing what he felt was a fatal error.

[22] Aristotle, *Physics,* 212a, 5 (McKeon, R., ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle.* New York, 1966). Kristeller (1964, p. 103ff) notes that the Greek term "topos" is usually translated as "space", but has the primary meaning of "place", which renders Aristotle's position more tenable. Yet, "Telesio seems to be aware of this ambiguity for he uses not only the term 'locus', which had been the standard Latin translation of Aristotle's 'topos', but also 'spatium', which is much more appropriate for his own notion of an empty space in which all bodies are contained. Thus he moves away from Aristotle in the direction of Newton's absolute space ... I am tempted to believe that it was Telesio himself who gave terminological precision to the word 'spatium' (space) and substituted it for 'locus' ... ."



identical throughout, can exist without bodies, and is that in which all beings are located. In defending this view, Telesio appeals to the testimony of the senses against the reasons of Aristotle."[23]

The *Luteplayer* is, in one sense, a return to the familiar for Caravaggio. While its isolated half-figure recalls earlier works such as the *Bacchino Malato* (Figure 4), the composition is much more open. The figure doesn't crowd the picture plane as in the *Bacchino*, and the use of foreground objects upon the broader table-top leads the viewer in to the picture a bit more gently and effectively. Most impressive is the *Luteplayer's* sense of space, of dark atmospheric air which envelopes the figure. One gets the impression that this is a figure situated within a space which, while ill-defined, is a space and not simply a dark backdrop as in the *Bacchino*.

There seems to be more to the *Luteplayer*, therefore, than just Bellori's strengthened shadows, since earlier works like the *Bacchino* are just as dark, if not darker. It would appear that Caravaggio is giving some thought as to what it means to place a body in space. What is required of that action *a priori* is something that, like Telesio's space, is capable of containing bodies, is distinct from the bodies contained within, and that remains even when no bodies are being contained. This consideration is something entirely new which, perhaps, had not needed enunciation before.[24] Lomazzo, for instance, seems not

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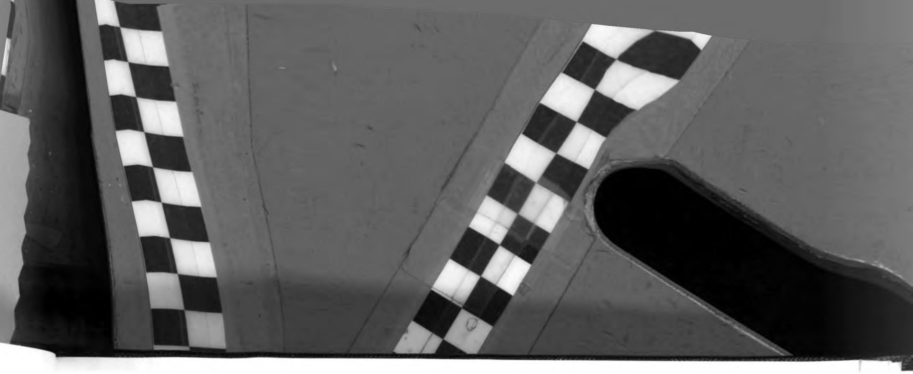
[23] Kristeller, 1964, p. 98.

[24] The "Age of Exploration" was radically changing mankind's notions regarding limits. The related growing interest on the part of the Church to spread to the farthest corners of the earth was a theme taken up by later artists like Bernini and Pozzo.



to have discussed the matter of space and others, like Leonardo, seem to have taken (perhaps unknowingly) an Aristotelian stance on the matter.[25]

Taken to an extreme, the *Concert* is a painting composed utilizing Aristotelian space. There are boundaries making contact throughout, whether they are bodies making contact with one another or the bodies making contact with the light colored background.[26] Furthermore, there is a distinct sense that if one were to remove all the figures from the picture, an empty space would not be left behind, only an empty canvas - - this is hardly the effect one striving to "paint well" and "imitate things well" would want to achieve.[27]

The matter of space seems to have been resolved with the *Luteplayer*. The key to that resolution, however, is tied to yet another related problem. That problem for Caravaggio seems to have been precisely how to give painted reality, painted substance, to an essentially Telesian emptiness: how to define a void and make it comprehensible. If this is accomplished, then the figure which occupies that void - - assuming that it is painted properly, and both Baglione and Bellori state that the *Concert* figures (themselves) were - - should appear "vivo e vero". The answer to this kind of problem, however, is not to be found in the writings of Telesio. It is found in the writings of Francesco Patrizi, a contemporary of Telesio who, interestingly,

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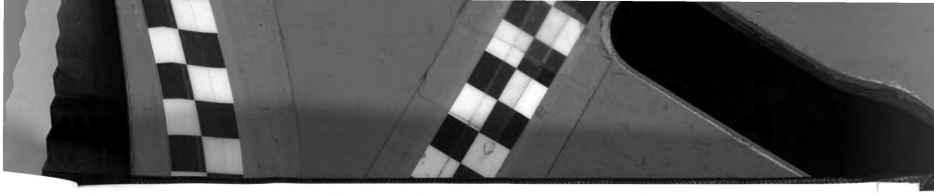
[25] "If the air makes contact with the body there is no space to put another body there ... ." C.A. 68 v. a, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, MacCurdy, E., ed. Garden City, 1941, p. 372.

[26] One could argue that Renaissance perspective is nothing more than a series of bodies, or boundaries, overlapping and diminishing in scale, and thus has nothing to do with space at all.

[27] Caravaggio's rejection, generally, of light backgrounds in favor of dark is similar to the shift in Greek vase painting from black figure to red figure, where red figure's dark background tends to dematerialize the pot in favor of the image upon it.



combines aspects of thought similar to Lomazzo's theory of light with the natural philosophy of Telesio.

Patrizi (1529-1597) was born in Dalmatia at Cherso, near Trieste, where he received some basic schooling. Initially largely self-taught, he later studied in Venice, at Ingolstadt in Bavaria and then at Padua (1547-1554), where he pursued philosophy and the humanities. He became interested in Platonism after hearing a Franciscan friar lecture on Platonic philosophy. This friar then recommended that Patrizi read the *Theologica Platonica* by Ficino. After Padua, he served Count Zaffo in Venice, reading him Aristotle's *Ethics*, and acting as the Count's secretary and administrator. He often went to Cyprus, where the Count owned property, and Patrizi served as that region's governor for a while. Later, perhaps in the 1570's, he went to Spain and sold to Philip II a number of Greek manuscripts he had apparently acquired on Cyprus. By 1572 he had begun a lively correspondence with Telesio.[28] From Spain he went to Modena and Ferrara where, in 1578, Duke Alfonso d'Este III appointed him Professor of Platonic Philosophy at the University of Ferrara. There he lectured mainly on Plato's *Republic.* In 1592, he was called to a similar position at the University of Rome by Pope Clement VIII, where his main subject was the *Timaeus*. He held this position until his death five years later.[29]

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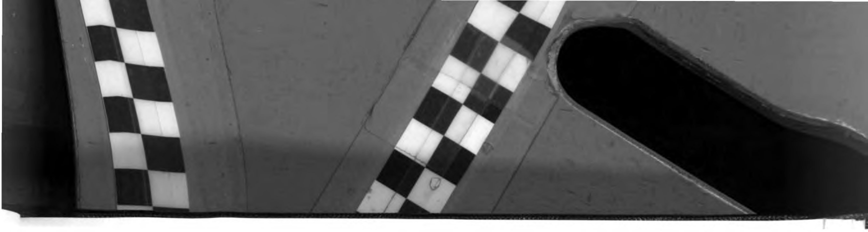
28 *De mari*, the fourth section of Telesio's *Varii de naturalibus rebus libelli*, published posthumously in Venice in 1590, was dedicated to Patrizi. Romano, F., ed., "Bernardino Telesio e l'idea di natura 'iuxta propria principia'," mostra bibliografica, documentaria e iconografica, *I quaderni della biblioteca nazionale di Napoli*, serie VII, 1. Roma, 1989, p. 65.

29 Kristeller (1964, p. 117) points out that the Ferrara and Rome appointments were "rare, if not ... unique instance[s] in which Renaissance Platonism succeeded in penetrating the [Aristotelian] university teaching of philosophy.".



Patrizi was a prolific writer with a wide range of interests. His writings deal with such subjects as poetry, philosophy of history, rhetoric, literary criticism,[30] Roman military history and science, mathematics, classical scholarship, and moral philosophy, in addition to metaphysics and natural philosophy.[31] Patrizi's two major works are the anti-Aristotelian *Discussiones peripateticae* (1581)[32] and his masterpiece, the *Nova de universis philosophia*, which was published twice, in 1591 (Ferrara) and 1593 (Venice).

From all accounts, Patrizi developed his strong Platonist views and his opposition to Aristotle during his tenure at Ferrara. There he hoped that a revival of Platonism might produce something on the order of the famous Florentine Academy, *"though without Ficino's flights of religious feeling, and that might serve as a counter-altar to the temple of the Aristotelians."*[33] His promotion of Platonism, and of his own philosophy, was unabashed and is revealing not only of Patrizi's views and concerns, but of the tenor of the time. In a dedicatory letter to Cardinal Paleotti, for instance, accompanying a portion of the *Nova philosophia*, he hopes to gain praise for his work since his philosophy stands to benefit Christian piety and all who love philosophy.[34] In a

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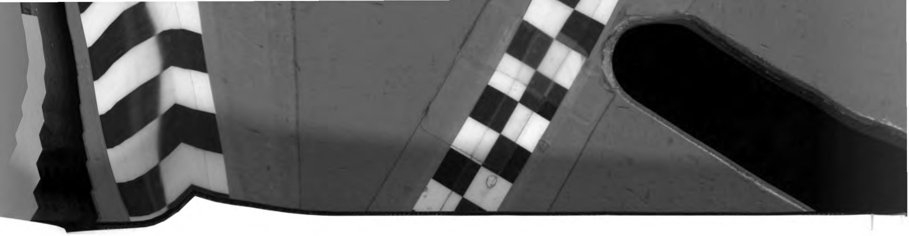
30 He favored Ariosto to Tasso.
31 A complete listing is in Benjamin Brickman's *An Introduction to Francesco Patrizi's "Nova de universis philosophia"*, New York, 1941, pp. 13-14. Kristeller (1964) also presents a summary and description of Patrizi's works, pp. 113-116. Brickman and Kristeller both provide biographical summaries, as well.
32 Brickman (*An Introduction*, p. 18.) notes that "Patrizi's opposition to the Stagirite was vehement and almost indignant."
33 Firpo, L., "The Flowering and Withering of Speculative Philosophy - Italian Philosophy and the Counter-Reformation: The Condemnation of Francesco Patrizi.", *The Late Italian Renaissance, 1525-1630* (Cochrane, E., ed.). London, 1970, p. 273.
34 Brickman (*An Introduction*, p. 15) observes that "it was the love of praise that induced [Patrizi] to undertake the entire gigantic task of



letter to Cardinal Cajetano he requested that much of Aristotle be banned or, at least, challenged by students armed with the "*pious rationalism*" of Platonism.[35] To Cardinal Lauro of Monreale he offers hope for "*the restoration of the freedom of thought and philosophy that prevailed among the ancients and in the Platonic schools.*"[36] Benjamin Brickman wrote that in these dedicatory letters and elsewhere "*one can see ... an interest in the advance of free speculation. ... In so far as he was concerned, the greatest advances could be made by freeing Christian as well as secular thought from the fetters of Aristotelianism. ... He is concerned to establish an organic unity between Platonic-Christian metaphysics and the world of nature.*"[37]

Platonism, Patrizi felt, was a better philosophical system. It was more rational, he thought, and he was convinced that rationalism was necessary in order to convince the non-Christian. Moreover, he recommended that his philosophy be taken up by the Jesuits and utilized in their teachings.[38]

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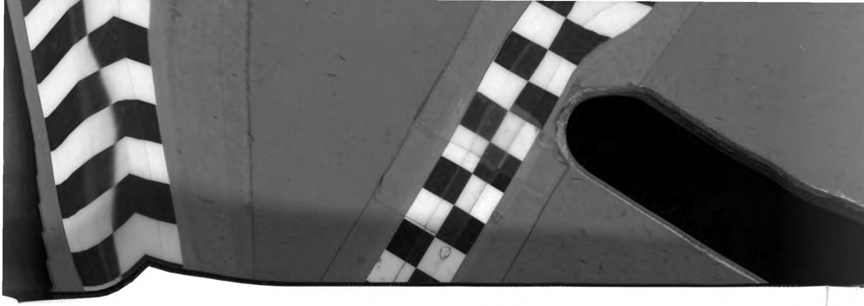
building a new philosophy. But he would refuse all praise if he did not believe that his work would bring about the desired result."

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid. This is not necessarily as radical a remark as one might think. Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) wrote that "those who live according to reason are Christians .... Such were Socrates and Heraclitus ... and those like them. (*Apology*, I. xlvi. 1-4, in Weinberg, *A Short History*, p. 8). Augustine held a similar view and included Plotinus.

[37] Ibid.

[38] "You will thus make all able men in Italy, Spain, and France friendly to the Church; and perhaps even the German Protestants will follow the example, and return to the Catholic faith. It is much easier to win them back in this way than to compel them by ecclesiastical censures or by secular arms. You should cause this doctrine to be taught in the schools of the Jesuits, who are doing such good work. If you do this, great glory will await you among men of future times. And I beg you to accept me as your helper in this undertaking." Portion of dedication to Gregory XIV, *Nova philosophia*, in Yates, F., *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. Chicago, 1964, p. 182ff.



Patrizi's *Nova philosophia* is mainly a treatment of metaphysics, divided into four sections, which contains some significant contributions to natural philosophy. The four sections seem to have been developed as separate treatises originally and have Greek titles:

1) *Panaugia*: dealing with the physical and metaphysical properties of light
2) *Panarchia*: which discusses Neo-platonic first principles
3) *Pampsychia*: a theory of souls, and
4) *Pancosmia*: the natural elements, astronomy and natural science.

In the *Pancosmia*, Patrizi lays out his theory of a corporeal world constructed of four *principia* or elements: space, brightness, heat and fluid.[39] Patrizi begins *De spacio physico*, Book One of the *Pancosmia*, by coming straight to the point:

> *"Now what did the Supreme Maker create before all other things apart from Himself? What was more necessary or fitting to create first than that which all other things required for their existence, and could not exist without, but which could itself exist without any other things, and needed none of them for its own existence? ... Aristotle himself maintained that that in the absence of which nothing else exists, and which can exist without anything, is necessarily prior to all other things. But this is Space itself. For all things, whether corporeal or incorporeal, if they are not somewhere, they are nowhere; and if they are nowhere they do not even exist. If they do not exist they are nothing. If they are nothing, there will then be neither souls, nor natures, qualities, forms or bodies. ... If they exist, they cannot exist nowhere. Hence they exist somewhere, and in some place, and so in Space - in length, breadth or depth, or in two or in all three of them. Therefore Space is prior to all these degrees of things: they need it to exist, while Space itself needs none of them to exist."*[40]

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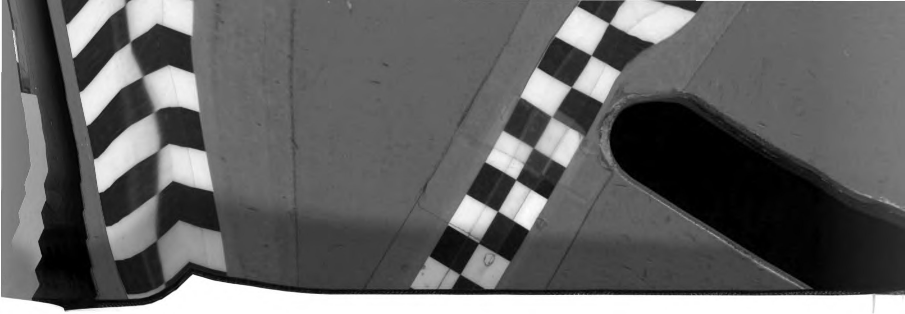
[39] *Spacium, lumen, calor* and *fluor*.
[40] *Pancosmia*, I, 61-a (Brickman, B., trans., "On Physical Space", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 [April, 1943], 225ff).



For the act of creation to proceed, the first thing created by God *extra se* was space, three dimensional space, since all bodies need it to exist. Space, therefore, is not only independent of bodies, as it was for Telesio, but has a "*primacy in nature.*"[41] "*Space is by its nature prior to the world, and the first of all things in the world, before which there was nothing, and after which, everything.*"[42]

After a series of interesting proofs for the existence of space, Patrizi turns to the matter of the essence of space.

> "*Is Space something?*", he asks, "*for it might be that Space exists, but is nothing. ... Are being and non-being the same or not the same? If the same, then anything both is and is not. This, however, is impossible as all philosophers agree. ... If anything is, it is a being; if it is not, it is nothing. ... Space, therefore, cannot be something and be counted among beings, and at the same time not be something ... . Hence Space - and distance - which in man extends from head to feet, belongs to the class of beings and is something.*
>
> "*But of what sort is this being, this something? ... All the ancients agreed that there are three kinds of Space - length or line, width or surface, and depth, which together with the other two they called body. ... The most authoritative physicists define a natural body as that which consists of length, breadth, and depth, and of 'antitypia', which is resistance. ... Thus there are three kinds, or species, of space, whether they are mathematical or physical when considered only per se - length or line, breadth or surface, and depth or body.*"[43]

Space, therefore, is a kind of body which differs from a physical body in that it lacks resistance.

Space, moreover, is an incorporeal entity which can coexist with - - can contain - - bodies without violating the principle of the impenetrability of bodies. "*These three spaces - length, width, and depth - have also been attributed to place (locus). ... Yet it is impossible for 'locus' to be a body. ... 'Locus', therefore, has three*

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[41] Brickman, 1941, p. 45.
[42] *Pancosmia*, I, 65-a (Brickman, 1943, 240).
[43] *Pancosmia*, I, 61-c, d (Brickman, 1943, 227ff).

dimensions, as has every body, but yet is not a body. ... Among the conditions of 'locus' is included, that the 'locus' contain the located object. ... 'Locus' must therefore contain the entire located object."[44] Patrizi, like Telesio, argues that Aristotle's space is that of a container. A container, however, is likewise a body and a body moving through another body (the container) admits of "*the interpenetration of bodies. But that is impossible.*"[45] The interpenetration of bodies is just the kind of problem that Caravaggio ran into in defining the space within the *Concert*.

How to define true, absolute space, as Caravaggio seems to have discovered, is very tricky indeed. Patrizi weaves a masterful discussion of the problem and formulates a conception which was to profoundly shape seventeenth century science.[46] Moreover, his conception of absolute space and how it is to be defined seems to find a parallel in Caravaggio's work from about the *Luteplayer* onwards.

> *"Space, which surrounds the world on all sides, is held to be finite by some of the ancients, infinite by others. There are those who held it to be the greatest of all things.*[47] *... I maintain that the Space outside the world is both finite and infinite. It is finite on the side where it touches the outermost surface of the world; finite not with respect to its own natural limit but with respect to the boundary of the world. But*

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[44] Ibid., I, 62-a,b (Ibid., 229). Patrizi's theory seems to create three spaces: the infinite, the finite, and the minimum, which is the actual *locus* which things occupy. A similar division could be argued for the *Luteplayer*.

[45] Ibid., 62-c (Ibid., 230).

[46] Brickman (1943, 225) notes that "originating thus in the Platonic tradition, absolute space reached Gassendi through Campanella, and through Gassendi and Henry More came to Newton's famous scholium. The two strains, empirical and Platonic, so prominent in Newton's conception, are already blended in Patrizi."

[47] Patrizi cites Thales: "When asked what the greatest thing is, he replied *locus*. For the world contains all things, but *locus* contains the world itself." *Pancosmia*, I, 64-a (Brickman, 1943, 236).

where *it recedes from the world and moves far away, it passes into the infinite.*"[48]

The matter of finite and infinite space would appear to have interested Caravaggio, or at least to have troubled him. For instance, in the *Buona Ventura* or, especially, the *Concert*, the space is probably more finite, more confining, than the artist wanted and leads to a rather flat and undramatic portrayal. On the other hand, the complete darkness of a work like the *Bacchino* has more space than is comprehensible and the sensation becomes, paradoxically, that of not having <u>any</u> space.[49] The resulting effect is curiously similar to that of the brightly illuminated *Concert*.

Patrizi continues the discussion of how one defines absolute space in Book Two of the *Pancosmia*, which is entitled *De spacio mathematico*.

> *"Primary space is divided by no power of Nature or of the human mind. Nevertheless Nature did place discrete bodies in its continuous parts. But the mind conceives it as discrete whenever it so desires. And throughout it lines, surfaces, bodies, and incorporeal qualities, it seems, are actually infinite both in number and in magnitude ... . All these things however are imagined by us as finite. And our mind selects those finite spaces that can be accommodated to the spaces of earthly bodies. ... The mind by its own power cuts off from primary Space those parts that will be of future use to it either in contemplation or in operation ... continuous quantity exists by nature, while Number is the work of the human mind. ... Hence there is solved that difficult question which has disturbed ancients and moderns, namely, which is prior in nature, the science of the continuous, which is called 'geometry' ... or the science of the discrete, which is called arithmetic. ... Since Space is the first of all natural things, it is clear that the science of Space, both of the continuous and the discrete, is prior to matter. ... Rightly did this saying appear over the entrance of the divine Plato's school: 'Let no one enter who is ignorant of geometry'.*[50] *... Moreover, from these two sciences others take their rise, and these are*

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[48] *Pancosmia*, I, 64-a, b (Brickman, 1964, 236-237).

[49] The total darkness of the background makes one aware more of a darkly painted canvas than of a depiction of space.

[50] Leonardo: "He who is not a mathematician according to my principles must not read me." *Quaderni*, IV, 14v (Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations*, p. 30).

> *neither few nor obscure, and are linked with other natural things."*[51]

Space is both finite and infinite. It is finite where it touches the surface of the world, infinite from the world on into the cosmos. It is genuinely infinite, therefore, except where it touches the world or is impinged upon by the necessity of the human mind to delineate space. As Brickman put it, "*the mind conceives in the infinite space dimensions which are finite, so that they can be accommodated to the spaces of mundane bodies.*"[52] In the *Luteplayer*, Caravaggio seems to utilize a similar concept in solving the problem of how to represent absolute space. He delineates it minimally, just enough to provide a mental reference. This is an echo of the Patrizian doctrine that states that space is both finite and infinite, that is to say, space is both corporeal and incorporeal, and that the human mind marks it off for its purposes.

How Caravaggio chose to delineate his absolute space is interesting because it takes one precisely to the point where we left Patrizi's theory, that is, a discussion of the relationship of geometry and arithmetic to space and matter, and that from those two sciences "*others take their rise ... . The first of these, and nearest to Space, is 'actinography', on which Democritus wrote of old, which is the science of the rays of Light. For Light is by nature nearest to Space, and the first to fill Space ... .*"[53] Caravaggio's delineation of absolute space is entirely predicated upon the use of light, almost to

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[51] *Pancosmia*, II, 68-a through d (Brickman, 1943, 243-245).
[52] Brickman, 1941, p. 48. Patrizi seems to also imply that space within the world is infinite too, but conceived of as finite.
[53] *Pancosmia*, II, 68-c (Brickman, 1943, 245). Democritus was also interested in the problem of the void.

the exclusion of traditional perspectival devices, which tend to impose arbitrary limits upon infinite space.

As was noted earlier, the first part of the *Nova philosophia* is entitled *Panaugia,* a term borrowed from Philo of Alexandria "*who called the light stemming from the light of God's Word by the most apposite name - 'Panaugia', a sort of 'omnilucentia'.*"[54] Patrizi, in the *Pancosmia,* states the premiss that has come to be attached to the philosophers of nature: "*Let us employ the testimony of the senses and rational proofs. Let us not be frightened by any great names. Let us study things themselves, the truth in things and the causes of the truth. Let us seek the truth for truth's sake.*"[55]

Patrizi tells us that for philosophy to be true, it must be founded upon beginnings which are known. Knowledge has its origin in the mind. Metaphysically, the origin of knowledge is attributed to God, but the first steps towards the acquisition of knowledge are through the senses. Drawing upon an ancient concept, Patrizi states that the most valued of the senses is that of sight,[56] and that the primary object of sight is light (*lumen*).[57]

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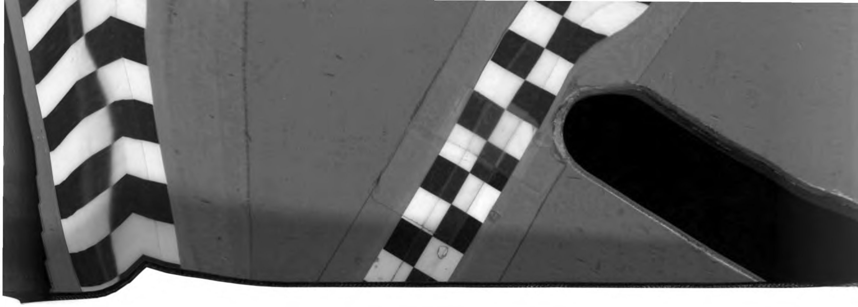
[54] *Panaugia,* IX, 21-b (Brickman, 1941, p. 27).

[55] *Pancosmia,* I, 61-a (Brickman, 1943, 226). There are a number of interesting parallels to this statement in Galileo's writings, for example: "Among the safe ways to pursue truth is the putting of experience before any reasoning, ... it not being possible that a sensible experience is contrary to truth. ... Not only should we not yield to the authority of another, but we should deny authority to ourselves whenever we find that sense shows us the contrary." *Letter to Fortunio Liceti* in Drake, S., *Galileo at Work.* Chicago, 1978, p. 409.

[56] The Christian tradition is represented by Sts. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. "When he sees he learns not from words uttered but from the objects seen and his sense of sight." Augustine, *De magistro,* xii, 39 (Hyman, A., and Walsh, J., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages - The Christian, Islamic and Jewish Traditions.* Indianapolis, 1983, p. 32). "The name 'seeing' indicates that it is used foremost to denote the activity of the sense of sight; but, because of the dignity and certainty of the sense, the name is extended, in accordance with



In Patrizi's system, God is the first cause of the world and although space was His first act of creation, it was not to his advantage to have it remain empty. He filled it, therefore, with that which most resembles space. *"A thing that is at once corporeal and incorporeal, uniform, simple in character, subject to interpenetration with bodies, that can be diffused throughout the universe, the most beautiful, most desired and most efficacious thing - brightness."*[58]

Light makes possible the cognition of things by making them visible to the sense of sight. Light, furthermore, is the conductor of heat (*calor*) which, with light, is the efficient cause of the material existence of things, and which also provides for their growth and preservation.[59] Heat acts upon Patrizi's fourth principle, fluid (*fluor*), which gives resistance to material bodies.[60] *Fluor* also serves to provide material continuity among all things,[61] *"from the crassest earth to the purest heaven."*[62] *"Patrizi's four 'principia' ... 'spacium', 'lumen', 'calor', and 'fluor' ... are all intrinsic to all bodies, not merely elementary ones. 'Fluor' gives them density and change of consistency.*[63] *But this change cannot occur without*

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linguistic custom, to all cognition by the other senses, and ultimately, even to cognition by the mind." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, I q. 67 a. 1 c.

[57] "The object of sight is the visible, and what is visible is (a) colour and (b) a certain kind of object which can be described in words but which has no single name ... it is only in light that the colour of a thing is seen. Hence our first task is to explain what light is." Aristotle, *De anima*, 418a 26 (McKeon, *Basic Works*).

[58] Brickman, 1941, p. 49.

[59] *Pancosmia*, V, 76-b and c (Brickman, 1941, p. 50).

[60] Ibid., IX, 85-c (Ibid.).

[61] Ibid., XXIII, 121-d (Ibid.).

[62] Ibid.

[63] "Fire and light are at once material and efficient causes in the world. Heat is the element that gives structure to a body and acts on the basic fluid, and is thus responsible for change in bodies. Thus, in emphasizing the *how* of natural processes he is moving in the direction

'calor'... . 'Lumen', in turn, is the vehicle of 'calor', and all of them need a medium in which to exist and operate - 'spacium'. All four exist by virtue of the supernal world."[64] Light forms the basis for the existence of all things in the world, which ultimately are derived from God, as is light itself.

Patrizi's doctrine, therefore, is both physical and metaphysical. As noted above, Patrizi attributes the metaphysical origin of knowledge to God. A direct knowledge of God, however, is impossible as He is beyond mortal reason and comprehension. He can, however, be indirectly "known" through His creations, since nothing is more concealed with respect to its true nature or more evident in created things.[65] Brickman notes that *"one might infer from this statement a duty imposed upon man to study nature. Would you know God, then study nature*[66] *... it, too, is touched with Divinity.*"[67] Knowledge, for Patrizi, comes about from the actual union of the knower with its object, because understanding is circular, returning to itself and aware that it is understanding. True knowledge, therefore, is an emanation and a return to God, and the vehicle is light.[68]

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of the road to modern science, or, more immediately, to Galileo and Newton." Brickman, 1941, p. 61. The "how of natural processes" may be of interest in assessing Caravaggio's rotting fruits apart from their iconography.

[64] Ibid., p. 51.

[65] *Panarchia*, XV, 31-c (Ibid., p. 36). This is another concept with a rich history and which appears, for example, in Augustine: "The invisible things in God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." (*Confessions*, X, 8, 6). Galileo notes that "God is known first ... by Nature in his works ... ." (*Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*, in Drake, S., *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo.* Garden City, 1957, p. 183).

[66] Brickman, 1941, p. 67.

[67] Ibid., p. 58.

[68] As Kristeller (1964, pp. 121ff) notes, "this scheme reveals the influence of several known sources [Plotinus, Proclus, and Ficino, for example], but in some details, and as a whole, it is original. ... It is

It is clear from all of the above that light, in addition to space, is held in the greatest regard by Patrizi and that it occupies, again like space, an intermediary place between the divine and the incorporeal - - all existence and knowledge is entirely dependent upon it, just as mankind is dependent upon God. Given what we know of Caravaggio, it's difficult to assess what he might have made of such advanced theories. The matters touched upon by Patrizi, and Telesio before him, do however seem related to the spatial problems that Caravaggio was working around.

When it comes to discussing more precisely what light *is*, Patrizi enters into a realm which Caravaggio should have been familiar with through Peterzano and Lomazzo. In Book One of the *Panaugia*, Patrizi makes a distinction between two types light which, following a long-established Latin tradition, he calls *lux* and *lumen.*[69] *Lux* is the light as it is found at its source, *lumen "is the light as it is found diffused around its source."*[70] The two types of lights are connected by rays which emanate from the source and on into the world, where light performs its functions for life, cognition, change, etc..

Material bodies in the world are of three kinds:

1) *Lucent* (*lucida*): Having an inborn light which is diffused outward, as in the case of the sun, the stars and fire

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clear ... that Patrizi is trying to combine Neoplatonic and Christian notions." There are also obvious similarities to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave.*

69 Cicero, for instance, makes the distinction. Patrizi probably took Ficino as his model. In *Convivium*, 11, 5, a ray of the sun is described as "lumen," and the light within the sun "lux." Barasch, M., *Light and Color in the Italian Renaissance Theory of Light.* New York, 1978, p. 83.

70 Kristeller, 1964, p. 119.

2) *Diaphanous* (*diaphana, transparentia, transpicua*): Through which lightness and darkness pass, as in ether, air and water

3) *Opaque* (*opaca*): Through which light cannot pass, but from which darkness emanates, as in the moon, the earth, and clouds.[71]

Patrizi's system, then, is very similar to that laid out by Lomazzo (see p. 24, above), which was also based upon Neo-Platonic premisses, with one major difference. Although both theoreticians maintain that there are basically two kinds of light - - primary and secondary - - Patrizi recognizes that it is not the light *per se* that changes during the course of its emanation, but that the properties of various bodies have an effect upon light in the course of its emanation.[72]

Many of Patrizi's Neo-Platonic theories, of course, have points of contact with the thought of Augustine, particularly with regard to the saint's theory of illumination. Augustine, however, did not deal with matters of space nor did he treat light as a physical property. For Augustine, *"illumination is rather the enabling of men to perceive the rules of numbers and wisdom."*[73]

To anyone familiar with the theories of Lomazzo, such concepts as those expounded by Patrizi would have been of great interest. Their interest, moreover, coming from one who urged the employment of the

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[71] *Panaugia*, II and V (Brickman, 1941, pp. 28-29). "Patrizi holds that it is the property of dark, opaque bodies to send forth darkness. Darkness, furthermore, is not the privative, but the real, opposite of light." Brickman, 1941, p. 29.

[72] Patrizi recognizes, for example, that rays entering a diaphanous body are bent, and broken (stopped) by an "opaque" one.

[73] Weinberg, J., *A Short History*, p. 41.

senses and to not fear "any great names", would certainly be strong for someone eager to "imitar bene le cose naturali" and who is claimed to have ignored and despised "gli ecellentissimi marmi de gli antichi e le pitture tanto celebri di Raffaelle."[74]

With the *Luteplayer*, as has been noted, Caravaggio seems to have resolved his spatial problems in a manner consonant with the Patrizian theory of absolute space. He has also, utilizing light, provided for a delineation of that space according to the needs of the human mind, but in opposition to traditional perspectival devices. Then, too, he has provided a solid "locus" for the figure. Light, moreover, not only gives depth to the painting in a way that was lacking in the *Concert* and the *Bacchino*, but gives the figure a kind of "existence" - - a sense of the resistance that Patrizi posits.

Baglione had commented that the youths in the *Concert* were "ritratti dal naturale, assai bene," while the player of the lute was "vivo e vero," seeming to imply a development in technique. This development, furthermore, appears to be tied to Caravaggio's move to "ingagliardire gli oscuri."[75] Spezzaferro observed that "tale mutamento consiste in un nuovo uso della luce nella costruzione della figura e della spazialita' del quadro,"[76] and that at this time Caravaggio was utilizing light to give "realta' spaziale al vuoto."[77] Taken as a whole, it is fairly clear that Caravaggio was working light and space in

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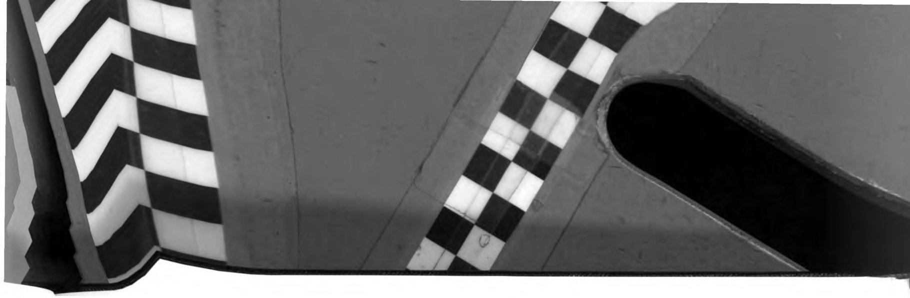
[74] Caravaggio, like Patrizi who (nonetheless) owes a debt to Aristotle, certainly did look to the ancients and Raphael.

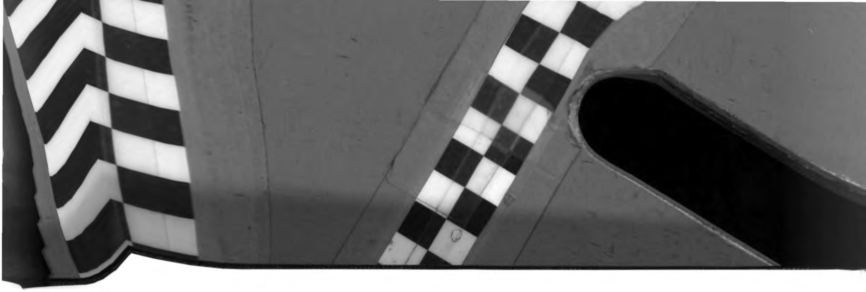
[75] Baglione also mentions "un colorito piu' tinto", which lies outside the parameters of this discussion.

[76] See p. 19 and n. 13 above.

[77] Again, for the record, this last comment by Spezzaferro was directed to the *Cardsharps*, but seems better applied to the *Luteplayer* which he also was discussing. See notes 8 and 9 above on p. 33.



a "Patrizian" manner or, at the very least, operating in a way which parallels that of the emerging natural philosophies of the time. There is yet one other aspect of Patrizi's thought related to Caravaggio that needs discussion and this will be dealt with in the next chapter.



METAPHYSICS AND MACHINATIONS

Baglione tells us that Caravaggio *"per opera del suo cardinale ebbe in S. Luigi de' Francesi la cappella de' Contarelli, ove sopra l'altare fece S. Matteo con un angelo. A man diritta, quando l'apostolo e' chiamato dal Redentore, ed a manca, quando su l'altare e' ferito dal carnifice, con altre figure."*[1]

In 1952, Denis Mahon published an invaluable collection of documents on the chronology of the San Luigi commissions to the sculptor Jacob Cobaert, to Cesare d'Arpino and then Caravaggio for the decoration of the Contarelli Chapel.[2] Mahon's documents make it clear that when the French Cardinal Matteu Cointrel (known as Contarelli to the Italians) died in 1585 instructions were left in his will for the completion of his chapel, implying that work had already begun. The Crescenzi family, designated as the executors of the cardinal's estate, procrastinated on the matter, and in 1594 the clergy of San Luigi petitioned Clement VIII to take some action. The clergy appealed to Clement again, in either late 1596 or early 1597, resulting in the assigning of the matter to the Reverenda Fabbrica di San Pietro. As Mahon points out, *"the Fabbrica was not merely ... a Board of Works for the rebuilding of San Pietro in Vaticano, but was a powerful body possessing extremely wide juridical authority."*[3] Within its jurisdiction was that of *"bequests made for pious purposes and the*

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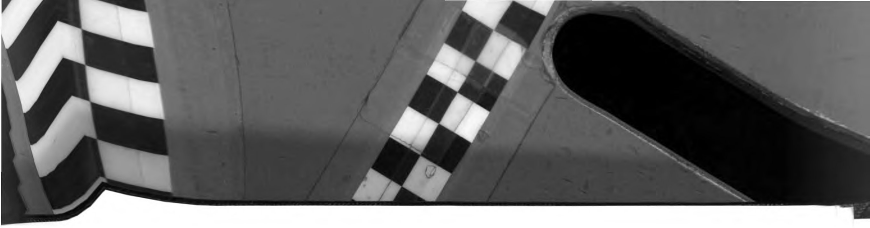
[1] Ludovici, S.S., *Vita del Caravaggio dalle testimonianze del suo tempo*. Milano, 1956, p. 44.

[2] Mahon, D., "Addendum to Caravaggio," *Burlington Magazine*, 586 (January, 1952), 3-23. Friedlaender presents other relevant documents (*Caravaggio Studies*. Princeton, 1974, pp. 294-301), while Hibbard (*Caravaggio*. New York, 1983, p. 296) refers to the 1974 discoveries published by Rottgen.

[3] Mahon, 1952, 15.



saying *of Masses,*"[4] and it had the power to utilize such funds at its sole discretion. One of the more powerful members of the Congregazione della Fabbrica - - if, indeed, not <u>the</u> most powerful - - was Cardinal Del Monte.[5] Once the Fabbrica was involved, Mahon believes that Del Monte *"successfully made his considerable weight felt in favour of his protege'.*"[6]

The Congregazione della Fabbrica itself was instituted by Clement VIII early in his pontificate.[7] Mahon posits that it is likely that *"one of his nominations as 'Deputato' was Del Monte;* [who] *was still young and energetic, and the fact that his intelligence in artistic matters was generally recognised is proved by his assumption of the Protectorship of the Accademia di San Luca when Cardinal Federico Borromeo relinquished it in 1595 on taking over his see at Milan.*"[8]

From all the documentation now available, it appears that the lateral walls of the Contarelli Chapel containing the *Calling of St. Matthew* (Figure 5) and the *Martyrdom of St. Matthew* (Figure 6), were completed *"by July 4, 1600, and aroused great interest as demonstrated by the episode of Federico Zuccari's visit to the chapel and by his*

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[4] Ibid. One of the clergy's complaints was that the chapel was boarded up and couldn't be used for Masses.

[5] Mahon reports, for instance, that the June 1608 meeting of the Fabbrica was held at Del Monte's residence. It was then that the decision was made to entrust the completion of St. Peter's to Carlo Maderno. Ibid., 16, n. 74.

[6] Ibid., 16.

[7] The original Bull has been lost.

[8] Mahon, 1952, 16. At first Del Monte shared the post with Cardinal Paleotti, to whom Patrizi wrote a dedication in the *Nova philosophia*. See Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 30, n. 15. The academy was founded by Federico Zuccari in 1593, upon high-minded principles. Caravaggio's name appears on the rolls, and Baglione relates that the artist's portrait was placed in the academy after his death, but Caravaggio's role there has not been established. On the academy see Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, p. 67ff.

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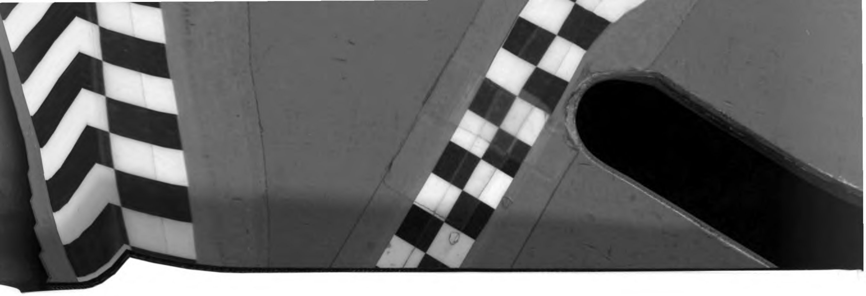

reaction."[9] Baglione, referring to the lateral canvases, states that "*quest'opera, per avere alcune pitture del naturale ... fece gioco all fama del Caravaggio.*"[10] It would appear, once again, that Caravaggio's naturalism is important towards understanding the contemporary reports and assessments.

With the *Martyrdom of St. Matthew,* Caravaggio seems to encounter many of the same difficulties as were presented by the *Concert,* only on a larger scale. Hibbard notes, for instance, that "*the painted areas on the walls of San Luigi are close to three and one-half meters wide and almost as high ... . To our knowledge Caravaggio had never painted a picture that was even two meters in either dimension; nor had he ever painted a picture with more than a few figures ... . Moreover the contract required the Martyrdom to take place in a church with considerable depth, with a view up several steps toward the altar and with many people.*"[11]

Indeed, the X-rays of the *Martyrdom* as reviewed by Mahon and others combined with Bellori's notation that "*egli la rifacesse due volte,*"[12] indicate that Caravaggio had considerable problems in adjusting to the scale and scope of the work.[13] Arguably, the result obtained in the *Martyrdom* is less than satisfying, particularly with regard to the clump of figures at the left. It is, however, an

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[9] Salerno, L., "The Roman World of Caravaggio: His Admirers and Patrons", *The Age of Caravaggio* (Gregori, M.,ed.), New York, 1985, p. 19. For Zuccari's remark see p. 8 and n. 10 above. Baglione relates that the Contarelli work "era da' maligni sommamente lodata." Ludovici, *Vita,* p. 44.

[10] Ludovici, ibid.

[11] Hibbard, *Caravaggio,* p. 95.

[12] Ludovici, *Vita,* p. 60.

[13] See Friedlaender (*Caravaggio Studies,* pp. 110-114) for a cogent discussion.

improvement upon the equally troublesome *Concert*, and even with the crowded figures on the left there is a finer sense of recession into space. This recession is punctuated by the self-portrait of the artist, which is set into relief by a column whose faint definition suggests an enveloping gloom beyond.

Entirely convincing is the central scene of the executioner and Matthew, where Caravaggio employed a complicated system of broad, open gestures combined with light. These devices not only give substance, weight and definition to the main protagonists (and also to the terrified youth who flees into the protective darkness which is already beginning to cloak him), but a great sense of air and space surrounding and passing between them. Particularly effective is the subtle shadow floating between the legs of the executioner. This minute touch gives one the sense that air does, in fact, exist within the pyramidal shape formed by the figures' legs, torsos and arms. On the whole, the work would seem to lie somewhere between the *Concert* and the *Luteplayer*, perhaps tilting a bit more towards the latter. Caravaggio still hasn't quite grasped how to handle a tight group of figures, but one <u>can</u> apprehend Patrizian elements of: a *locus* in which the figures can exist; a suggested space delineated for the comprehension of the mind in the steps, altar and columns; and the infinity of space beyond.

Also of interest for this discussion is the facing canvas of the *Calling of St. Matthew*. *Matthew 9.9* states that Jesus *"saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax-collector's place, and said to him, 'Follow me.' And he arose and followed Him."* The original contract which Caravaggio inherited describes the scene to be painted as *"... St. Matthew within a shop, or actually a room used for customs with various*

things pertaining to that service . . . . St. Matthew, dressed as seems fitting for that post, rises from the counter with the desire of following Our Lord, who, passing along the street with His disciples, calls him to the apostolate . . ."[14] Caravaggio's depiction, then, does not follow the scriptural text nor does it entirely follow the wording of the contract. Instead, as Hibbard points out, Caravaggio seems to have followed a drawing by Arpino which does follow the instructions of the contract. When Christ and the disciples "*encounter the shop of the tax collector; in the drawing it is seen at the rear as an opening in a palace with men walking in.*"[15] Caravaggio has reduced the scene considerably, set it outside a building, and utilized a table to gather the figures around.

Hibbard's description of the scene is to the point and worth quoting at length.

> "*In Caravaggio's painting the tax collector ... and his worldly companions are seated around a table, shown in a raking light. Although this light falls from the right, Caravaggio did not coordinate it with the daylight coming down from the lunette in the chapel. In the gloom at the right, spottily illuminated, Christ and a disciple (presumably Peter) seem to advance toward the group, although Christ's feet point forward. His outstretched hand catches the light as he gestures to Matthew to follow him; Matthew responds with an identifiable 'Who, me?' gesture that we can all but read on his lips. The two figures closest to the picture plane ... have their backs to us. Before them is a frieze of men seen against the wall and the dark. At the far left a vertical strip of even darker background seems to indicate the corner of the building behind the figures; that is, they seem to be outside a Roman palace rather than within it. The Calling of St. Matthew is larger and more complex than Caravaggio's earlier works, subtle and shrouded in deeper shadow. It is also*

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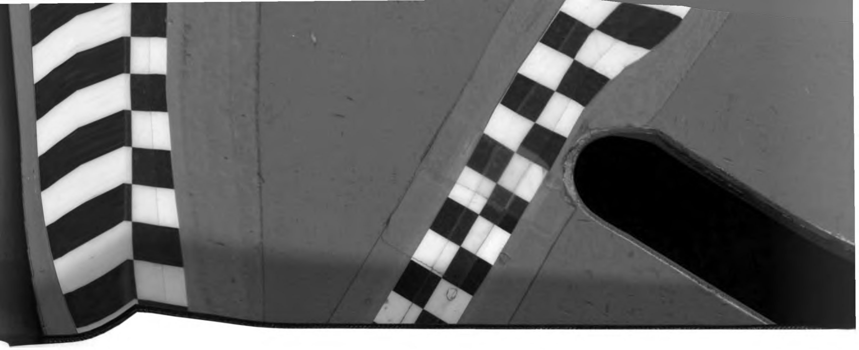
[14] Contracted originally to Muziano (differently, 1565) and then Arpino in 1591. The 1591 contract is in Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 296, n. 52. See Friedlaender (*Caravaggio Studies*, p. 294) for the contract with Muziano.

[15] Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 96. Hibbard notes that the drawing may have been executed while Caravaggio was still with Arpino.



strikingly different from the narrative scenes of his contemporaries."[16]

Again, all those elements that might be described as Patrizian elements of spatial definition are present: a *locus*; a minimal delineation of space as a mental reference; and a sense of a vast infinity both to the left, the right[17] and ahead beyond the faintest of corners.

Hibbard's observations attest to these two kinds of spatial definition. He points out, first, that despite the prominence and intensity of the light cascading in from the right in Caravaggio's painting, it does not correspond with the light which actually enters the chapel from a lunette over the altar. Caravaggio was handed a perfect opportunity "to imitate a natural thing" which had a simple, direct application to his composition, yet he opted to forego it. It is not, therefore, meant to replicate genuine sunlight.

A second feature of the composition especially noticed by Hibbard is *"the outstretched hand of Christ* [which] *catches the light as He gestures to Matthew to follow."* Hibbard observes that St. Augustine had referred to the Holy Spirit as the Finger of God, *"an idea familiar from the hymn 'Veni Creator Spiritus'... . The whole mission of Jesus was uniquely directed by the 'finger of God,' which is here equated with Christ's finger. ... Christ ... in turn invests Matthew with Divine Grace."*[18]

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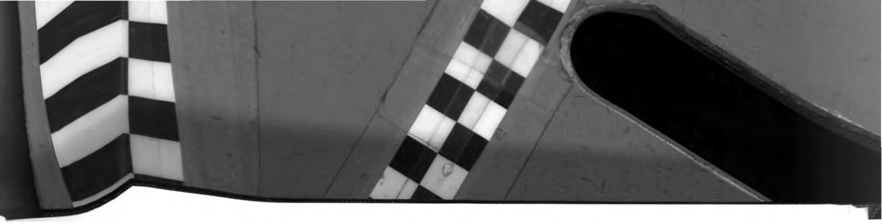
16 Ibid.
17 One should note, for instance, how the chair to the left extends off out of the viewer's sight and how St. Peter's trailing foot has only just emerged from off to the right.
18 Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 100. Hibbard goes on to state that the hymn "was sung on special occasions such as papal conclaves in the Sistine Chapel. This connection may have inspired Michelangelo. Caravaggio transforms Adam's hand into that of Christ ... ."



Kristeller wrote that Patrizi's philosophy, unlike that of Augustine, is a *"mixture of physical science with metaphysical and theological speculation."*[19] This combination has already been discussed here, but it becomes even more apparent in what Kristeller calls Patrizi's *"supercelestial"* light.[20] Patrizi had asserted that the visible universe - - our world - - is finite when it meets the heavens. In our sphere of existence, celestial light is mixed with darkness. Outside our world is a space of infinite dimension filled with the purest of light. This light beyond our celestial world is still corporeal, however, *"it has its source in the incorporeal light, which belongs to the incorporeal and divine things, that is, to the souls, intellects, angels, and God ([Panaugia] Bk. IX)."*[21] God is the source of this incorporeal light (*lux prima*) and from Him emanates that diffused light (*lumen*) *"which is first found in His Son, and then in all incorporeal creatures (Bk. X)."*[22] The secondary light in the physical world, of course, is also ultimately derived from God. *"Thus light is said to be infinite, and may be considered incorporeal in its source, while it is both incorporeal and corporeal when considered in its state of irradiation, and thus mediates between God and the corporeal world."*[23]

In the *Calling of St. Matthew,* it is in fact not ordinary sunlight which streams in from the right, but *lux prima,* emanating from God. This explains, perhaps, why the painted rays do not correspond to the rays

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19 Kristeller, P.O., *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance.* Stanford, 1964, p. 120.
20 Ibid., p. 119.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.

actually filtering through the chapel lunette, despite how attractive the idea must have been to Caravaggio. Furthermore, the scene in the painting takes place out of doors, so it could not represent light from an out of view doorway or window, either. As Hibbard states, the light catches and illuminates the hand of Christ, who "invests Matthew with Divine Grace,"[24] before finally falling upon the face of the puzzled tax collector. *"The immanence of God in all of us,"* Hibbard wrote, *"is demonstrated at the left of the chapel in the Calling, where Matthew is arrested in his worldly life by the finger of God, made manifest by Caravaggio's highlighting."*[25] Both the light and Christ mediate, just as Patrizi argued, "between God and the corporeal world."

Matthew's reaction to his calling bears some scrutiny as well. Bert Treffers recently wrote that Matthew's readily apparent reaction of "who me?" is not theologically correct, since Matthew was converted immediately.[26] It was noted earlier that Caravaggio hadn't held entirely to the contract which specified that Matthew, in accordance with the texts, "... rises from the counter with the desire of following Our Lord ... ." Brickman relates that Patrizi had posited that *"God knows in a way quite different from our method, for He knows everything immediately."*[27] Patrizi's concept seems to have been picked up and enunciated beautifully by Galileo.

> *"... The manner whereby God knows the infinite propositions of which we understand some few is much more excellent than ours, which proceeds by ratiocination and passes from conclusion to*

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[24] It's interesting that right near the tip of the finger of Christ the shaft of light does seem to diffuse.
[25] Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 116.
[26] Treffers, B., "Dogma, esegesi e pittura: Caravaggio nella capella Contarelli in San Luigi dei Francesi," *Storia dell'arte*, 67 (1989), 247.
[27] Brickman, B., *An Introduction to Francesco Patrizi's Nova de Universis Philosophia*. New York, 1941, p. 67.

> *conclusion, whereas His is done at a single thought or intuition. ... Now these inferences, which our intellect apprehends with time and gradual motion, the Divine Wisdom, like light, penetrates in an instant, which is the same as to say has them always present.*"[28]

Matthew, it is true, reacts to his calling to the apostolate in an entirely human and confused way. Caravaggio's decision to depict Matthew in this manner, however - - in contradistinction to both text and contract - - may indicate that more is to be read into that depiction than just a clever observation of human nature. One wonders, for instance, if this was a depiction meant to be understood by the *conoscenti*.

With the lateral canvases at San Luigi, Caravaggio seems to have finally come of age. The process, having its beginnings in the Italian north, influenced by Peterzano, and (likely) Lomazzo, is one of "laborious ... intellectual growth ... that has little in common with the normal development of contemporary painters," just as Mina Gregori said.[29] Moreover, it would appear that his intellectual development, as evidenced in his paintings of the time, has less to do with theology, generally, than with how the new natural philosophies and sciences can be applied to painting - - even the painting of religious themes.

Whether or not Caravaggio specifically knew of Patrizi's theories is difficult to say. His work during the time of his association with Del Monte certainly reflects many similarities to Patrizi's thought, perhaps even an acquaintance with the philosophical theories then circulating - - particularly in Del Monte's circle, and even his neighborhood which includes La Sapienza. Although it's difficult to tie

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28 De Santillana, G., *Galileo Galilei - Dialogue on the Great World Systems*. Chicago, 1955, "The First Day", p. 48ff.
29 See p. 16 above.

Del Monte with Patrizi directly, it is equally difficult to disengage him from Patrizi's circle in Rome.

Patrizi's *Nova de Universis Philosophia* of 1591 was dedicated to Pope Gregory XIV, whose crest figures prominently on the cover. In his dedication he asked for papal protection in the matter of Platonic philosophy *"which, he said, had been called upon to rid the schools of impious Aristotelian doctrine and which was capable of reconverting the dissidents in Germany."*[30] The eleven separate parts of the work were dedicated to an impressive array of distinguished cardinals, such as Gabriele Paleotti of Bologna,[31] and Federico Borromeo.[32] A significant number of these cardinals, moreover, had been students alongside Patrizi at Padua, including Scipione Gonzaga, Girolamo della Rovere,[33] Agostino Valier,[34] Pope Gregory himself, and the pope's successor, Ippolito Aldobrandini (Clement VIII).

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[30] Firpo, L., "The Flowering and Withering of Speculative Philosophy - Italian Philosophy and the Counter-Reformation: The Condemnation of Francesco Patrizi," *The Late Italian Renaissance, 1525-1630* (Cochrane, E., ed.). London, 1970, p. 275.

[31] Paleotti's *Discorso attorni alle immagini sacre et profane* was published in 1582.

[32] Nephew of St. Charles. Caravaggio's Ambrosiana *Still Life* was "apparently in the possession of Cardinal Federico Borromeo in 1607, and presumably he had it before he left Rome in June 1601." Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 294, n. 47. According to Wright, Federico's "cosmological views ... were Copernican, not Aristotelian. This was natural in a friendly correspondent of Galileo, who followed the theories of the astronomer by means of his own observations through a telescope, ... accepted his writings for the Ambrosiana library, [and] continued to support Galileo." (Wright, A.D., *The Counter-Reformation - Catholic Europe and the Non-Christian World*. London, 1982, p. 46.). Borromeo also had close ties with the Oratory of Philip Neri, "the main center of Platonism in a Rome dominated by Aristotelianism." Maynard, T., *Mystic in Motley - The Life of St. Philip Neri*. Milwaukee, 1946, p. 213.

[33] Spezzaferro ("La cultura del cardinal Del Monte e il primo tempo del Caravaggio," *Storia dell'arte*, 9-10, 1974, 67) notes that Del Monte "vissuto fin verso i 25 anni presso la corte dei Della Rovere ... .".

[34] In 1591, Valier wrote a Platonic-styled dialogue centered around Philip Neri, who is often referred to in the dialogue as "noster

Luigi Firpo reports that there *"was not a single dissenting voice either among the Aristotelians or among the prelates."*[35] In October of 1591, for instance, Aldobrandini wrote Patrizi that the new philosophy *"accords perfectly with Christian piety,"* invited him to his home and mentioned that a move was afoot to establish a chair for him at the university.[36] By the following January, Aldobrandini was pope, and by May Patrizi was living in the home of the future Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini in Rome, through whose academy he undoubtedly encountered Tasso.[37] At the university he set out immediately to lecture on the *Timaeus,* attracting a large following and commanding the high salary of 600 *scudi* per year.[38]

Around the middle of 1592, it became apparent that Patrizi's doctrine was coming under scrutiny. As Firpo put it, it was *"not the generic Platonism of the Nova philosophia that stirred up the murmuring ... rather a group of specific assertions that might be suspected of heterodoxy."*[39] Later in the year the Congregation of the Index called

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Socrates." Valier, A., (Cistellini, A., ed.) *Il dialogo della gioia cristiana.* Brescia, 1975, f. 16v. (Federico Borromeo, too, referred to Philip as the "Christian Socrates". See Lavin, I., "Divine Inspiration in Caravaggio's Two *St. Matthews,*" *Art Bulletin,* LVI, March, 1974, 73, n. 44.) Valier was also a member of the Congregation of the Index. The city of Cosenza and the nephew of Telesio appealed to him for help in getting acceptable changes made to the *De rerum,* "essendo gia' molti anni sono morto l'autore e ... essendo stata sempre volunta' e desiderio di detto autore di ubedire alla Santa Madre Chiesa ... ." Firpo, L., "Filosofia italiana e controriforma: La proibizione di Telesio," *Rivista di filosofia,* 46 (1950), 45, doc. 2.

[35] Firpo, 1970, p. 275.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Cinzio appears to be the "Aldobrandino" mentioned in the company of Del Monte and other cardinals at the "banchetto nel proprio palazzo della Cancelleria ... [dove] erano molti giovanetti in ballo, vestiti da donna." Orbaan, J.A.F., *Documenti sul barocco in Roma* (Roma, 1920, p. 139. n. 1), in Ludovici, *Vita,* p. 96, n. 23.

[38] Firpo, 1970, p. 276.

[39] Ibid., p. 278.

in Patrizi, who offered to retract whatever might be in error and quickly presented a hand-written "Emendatio." Nonetheless, Patrizi's book was placed on the Index *"until corrected by the author and printed at Rome with the approval of the Master of the Sacred Palace."*[40] A week later, Patrizi presented another version of his text and three months later (March, 1593), yet another. This latter draft Patrizi presented to Antonio Acquaviva, general of the Jesuits, *"so that a father in the general's confidence might conduct a conclusive examination."*[41] Acquaviva selected Benedetto Giustiniani, the brother of Caravaggio's later patron Vincenzo and the subject of a lost portrait by the artist.[42] According to Firpo, *"the opinion of Giustiniani ... after a close examination, cannot have been too harsh,"* as Patrizi's actions and correspondence with the Index display a positive attitude.[43] On 3 July 1593, the Index ordered Giustiniani's criticisms sent to Patrizi and requested the philosopher to meet with his censor to prepare a final, polished draft. Firpo notes that the revision must have been fairly intricate to carry out, as Patrizi needed eleven months to complete it, along with a written defense, and to receive favorable certification from a Jesuit teacher of moral theology at the Collegio Romano.[44]

Giustiniani was called back to give his opinion which *"must have been rather ambiguous. For the cardinals ... referred the matter to ... the rigid Jesuit Cardinal Toledo. ... The session of 2 July 1594 ...*

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[40] Ibid., p. 279.
[41] Ibid., p. 280.
[42] For the portrait see Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 163, n. 22. Vincenzo purchased the problematic first version of *St. Matthew and the Angel*. Hibbard notes (p. 313, n. 107) that "Girolamo Giustiniani, nephew of Cardinal Benedetto and of Marchese Vincenzo, had become an Oratorian in 1596 and rose to 'Preposito' in 1623.".
[43] Firpo, 1970, p. 281.
[44] A Spaniard, Juan Azor.

resulted in the prohibition of the whole work."[45] Patrizi begged for forgiveness. What errors he made, he said, he had made from ignorance, adding that he would continue to submit himself and his work to the correction of the Church. Patrizi's conviction in trying to assemble a system of "pious rationalism" may have saved him, for when the Index of Clement VIII appeared in 1596, his work had avoided being "completely prohibited."[46] Hope still remained, but died, finally, with Patrizi in early 1597.

An interesting factor in all this is the opinion of Patrizi exhibited outside the Congregation of the Index. We know, for instance, from a letter that in 1594, the year of the original prohibition, Patrizi was still in the good graces of Cinzio Aldobrandini.[47] Moreover, he continued to teach at the university until his death. At that point, an interesting thing occurred when the pope asked Roberto Bellarmino for his opinion regarding a successor to Patrizi.[48] Firpo writes that Bellarmino's response was that "*Platonism contained many more insidious subtleties than Aristotelianism. It did so not because it was more erroneous but rather because its deceptive affinity with Christianity could more easily lead minds from the straight path. Platonism, therefore, was more dangerous than Aristotelianism for the same reason that heresy was more dangerous than paganism. And Bellarmino recommended that the chair be suppressed.*"[49]

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[45] Firpo, 1970, p. 282.
[46] Also appearing on the list was Telesio's *De rerum*.
[47] See Firpo, 1950, 166.
[48] Bellarmino, who would soon be busy with Galileo, had just been elevated to the post of papal theologian and counselor to the Holy See.
[49] Firpo, 1970, p. 278.

Bellarmino's answer to Clement is of interest on a number of counts. Clearly, Bellarmino had given long consideration to the theories of Patrizi and found much to fear in his pious rationalism - - despite Patrizi's obviously devout Catholicism. In reading the contemporary reports regarding Caravaggio's religious paintings (particularly those that had been rejected by the clergy), one senses much the same kind of discomfort and apprehension, in spite of the fact that, as Luigi Salerno has observed *"ogni parte della sua opera ... rivela una profonda religiosita‘."*[50] Bellori, at one point, gives an accounting of such works and closes the discussion with the observation that *"si‘ come dunque alcune erbe producono medicamenti salutiferi e veleni perniciosissimi, cosi‘ il Caravaggio se bene giovo‘ in parte fu nondimeno molto dannoso ... ."*[51] Caravaggio and Patrizi both seem to have been categorized as lying somewhere between the sacred and the profane.

The "in-between" characterization of Caravaggio is explicit in a playful letter of 1603 from Cardinal Ottavio Paravicino[52] in Rome to Monsignor Paolo Gualdo[53] at Padua:

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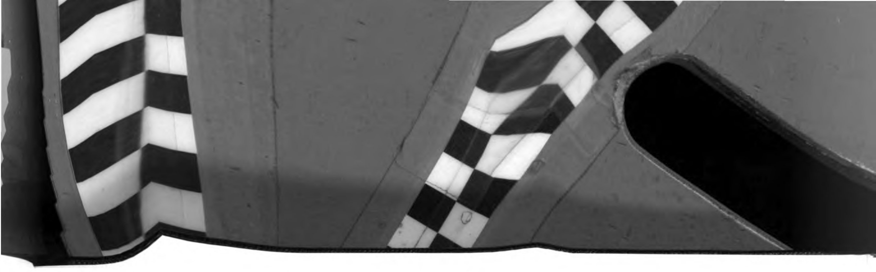
[50] Bologna, F., "Il Caravaggio nella cultura a nella societa‘ del suo tempo," *Colloquio sul tema Caravaggio e i caravaggeschi, organizzato d'intesa con le Accademie di Spagna e di Olanda* (Roma, 12-14 febbraio 1973). Roma, 1974, p. 162.

[51] Ludovici, *Vita*, p. 68. In *Le vite de' pittori messinesi* of 1724, Francesco Susinno claims that Caravaggio "l'aver voluto altresi‘ fuori della sua professione andar questionando le cose della nostra sacrosanta religione, gli da‘ taccia di miscredente ... " Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, p. 386.

[52] Paravicino was a favorite Oratorian of Philip Neri and was tutored in his youth by Baronius.

[53] Gualdo was born in Vicenza and earned a doctorate in civil and canon law at Padua in 1581. He spent some time in Rome before settling back in Padua in 1591 where he became archpriest of the Duomo di San Antonio in 1609. Gualdo met Galileo at the home of the scholar and bibliophile, Gian Vincenzo Pinelli in Padua (Drake, S., *Galileo at Work - His Scientific Biography.* Chicago, 1978, pp. 47 and 451). Galileo was



> *"Molto Rev. Sig.r come fratello,*
> *Michelangelo da Caravaggio Pittore eccelente, dice, che capito' per ombra, o spirito in Vicenza, e trovo' un galant'huomo, che si diletta de pittura, et li fece mirabili interrogationi; discrive, ma non dipinge col pennello un prete, ch'ha cera di reformato, et se non parla pare un Theatino; ma nelli discorsi tocca galantemente d'ogni cosa; ... lo discrive volonteroso di far dipingere, et hora discorreva delle Chiese, hora di far qualche bell'opra per Mons.r Vescovo di Padova: ma chi gli avesse fatto qualche quadro, che fusse in quel mezzo tra il devoto, et profano, che non l'averia voluto vedere da lontano. ... V.S. di grazia ci dichiari come puo' essere tutto questo senza essersi partito di qua, et chi e' questo religioso Vicentino cosi' curioso et diligente ... ."*[54]

That Caravaggio was operating within the highest circles of Roman, and to some extent Italian, intellectuals is readily apparent from the evidence. As has been stated here frequently, the problem of defining his relationship to this circle is troublesome, even exasperating. Much has been made of the presence of Cardinal Del Monte's brother Guidobaldo in Rome, and a look at the scientific interests of the Del Monte household is, indeed, revealing. This is particularly true with regard to Galileo, whom Del Monte supported and

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introduced to Pinelli by Cardinal Del Monte and his brother Guidobaldo (Brodrick, J., *Galileo - The Man, his Work, his Misfortunes*. London, 1964, p. 23.) Gualdo was one of Galileo's most trusted advisors and one of his staunchest defenders. Much of Pinelli's library ended up in the possession of Federico Borromeo. Patrizi is known to have corresponded with "Gian Francesco" [?] Pinelli (apparently in 1592) regarding a private copy of Tycho Brahe's then-unpublished *De mundi aetherei recentioribus phaenomenis*. Rossi, P., "Francesco Patrizi: Heavenly Spheres and Flocks of Cranes," *Italian Studies in the Philosophy of Science* (Dalla Chiara, M.L., ed.), 1981, p. 372.

[54] Bologna, F., "Il Caravaggio nella cultura ...," p. 159. "Paolo Gualdo doveva aver conosciuto da qualche parte, ma personalmente, il Caravaggio. S'era interessato alla sua arte e aveva trattato con lui per averne un quadro e per procuragli qualche commissione. ... Un cosi' fatto prete, ad onta che si fosse interessato all'opera di Caravaggio ... avrebbe dichiarato (non si dimentichi che nella finzione del Paravicino e' sempre Caravaggio a parlare in prima persona) che non avrebbe voluto veder neppure da lontano quel tipo di quadri a 'mezzo tra il devoto et il profano', in cui non e' difficile riconoscere i quadri sacri tipici del Caravaggio stesso."

whose thought, as discussed in the next chapter, exhibits many similarities to that of Patrizi.

WINDS AND CROSS-CURRENTS OF CHANGE

In 1587, Galileo became interested in the centers of gravity of parabolic solids through an Archimedean treatise, *On Plane Equilibrium*, and a 1565 book by Federico Commandino. According to Stillman Drake, "*an original and ingenious device hit upon by Galileo for his analysis gained attention from eminent mathematicians both in Italy and abroad. It also won for him the friendship of Marquis Guidobaldo del Monte, a former pupil of Commandino and author of the most important book on mechanics published in the sixteenth century.*"[1] It appears, moreover (according to Galileo himself), to have been Guidobaldo who pushed Galileo towards this kind of research in the first place.[2]

In 1589 Galileo obtained the chair of mathematics at Pisa from Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany through the recommendation of Cardinal Del Monte. Del Monte had himself ascended to the cardinalate when Ferdinand surrendered it in 1587 to become Grand Duke instead. He arranged for Del Monte, who had served the Tuscan court, to step in.[3] Spezzaferro has noticed that early-on the Cardinal demonstrated a partiality towards the young scientist[4] and that they seem to have been genuinely friends. This apparent friendship is evidenced in a letter of

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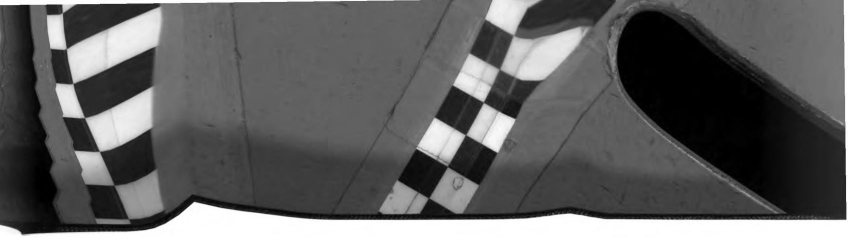
[1] Drake, S., *Galileo at Work*. Chicago, 1978, p. 13. Guidobaldo's book is the *Mechanicorum libri VI* of 1577. See Klemm, F., *Storia della tecnica*. Milano, 1959, pp. 168-170. In 1600 Guidobaldo wrote the *Perspectivae libri sax* . Caravaggio, however, consistently rejects formal perspective. Perhaps his one touch point with perspective would be that it, conceptually, is a mental construct applied by the mind to delineate space. See, however, p. 38, n. 26 above.

[2] Geymonat, L., *Galileo Galilei*. Torino, 1957, p. 19.

[3] Ferdinand had spent most of his life in Rome, having gone there as a fifteen-year-old cardinal in 1563. Within ten years he had become quite influential at the Sacred College, and founded the society of the Propaganda Fide. Hibbert, C., *The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall*. New York, 1975, p. 279.

[4] Spezzaferro, L., "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte e il primo tempo del Caravaggio," *Storia dell'arte*, 9-10 (1974), 73.



December 30th of 1588, in which Guidobaldo responds to Galileo, thanking him "... *dall'allegrezza che mostra della esaltazione del Sr. mio fratello al Cardinalato.*"[5] There is a great quantity of correspondence surviving between the Del Montes and Galileo, indicating indeed, something of a personal affinity. Cardinal Del Monte, in fact, was closely - - perhaps dangerously - - involved with Galileo's dealings with Bellarmino and offered Galileo advice right up to the bitter end.[6]

There is evidence, too, that Cardinal Del Monte had a genuine interest in what Galileo was investigating. In a letter of 1610 to Belisario Vinta[7], Galileo identifies Cardinal Del Monte as being one of the first to whom he wishes to send a telescope, along with a copy of the *Siderius nuncius.*[8] Galileo later sent Del Monte a telescope and the cardinal wrote back that *"Il Sig.r Baldino Gherardi mi ha presentato da parte di V.S. l'occhiale e 'l discorso ... l'uno e l'altro mi e' stato oltra modo caro per amor di V.S. .... Con l'occhiale ho gia fatto belle esperienze e spero farne dell'altre ... .*"[9]

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[5] Guidobaldo to Galileo, in Spezzaferro, "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte ...," 74 and n. 89. Guidobaldo signs the letter, "come fratello."
[6] In the end, Galileo chose to go against the advice of Del Monte as this letter of the Florentine ambassador in March of 1616 indicates: " Galileo has relied more on his own counsel than on that of his friends. The Lord Cardinal del Monte and myself, and also several cardinals from the Holy Office, had tried to persuade him to be quiet and not go on irritating this issue. If he wanted to hold this Copernican opinion, he was told, let him hold it quietly and not spend so much effort in trying to have others share it." De Santillana, G., *The Crime of Galileo.* Chicago, 1955, p. 119. De Santillana continues (p. 124) that on the fifth of March the decree of the Congregation of the Index was published "and forwarded to all the Inquisitors in all parts of the world with orders to enforce it rigorously. It was read from the pulpits and announced in the universities; books were confiscated in shops and libraries.".
[7] Secretary of state and and senator under Ferdinando I.
[8] Spezzaferro, L., "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte ...," 78, n. 113.
[9] Ibid.

Besides a shared interest in things scientific, Del Monte and Galileo both enjoyed music. Del Monte had a large collection of musical instruments, which perhaps Caravaggio had recourse to, and the cardinal wrote to a friend, "*Sappiate che io suono di chitarriglia et canto alla spagnuola.*"[10] Spezzaferro notes that Galileo, "*figlio del camerata dei Bardi, Vincenzo,*" was an accomplished luteplayer,[11] and Drake that Galileo's father was "*a leader in the move from contrapuntal embellishment to harmonic modulation and in the birth of modern opera.*"[12] In 1572, Vincenzo was assisted in this endeavor by Girolamo Mei who, in Rome, was investigating the harmonies used in ancient Greek music. Patrizi, as it turns out, was interested in many of the same problems as Vincenzo and Mei and wrote at length on them in *Della poetica, La deca istorale*, book 6 (1586).[13]

Another point of contact was Del Monte's and Galileo's love for art. Galileo's biographer, Vincenzio Viviani,[14] reports that "*nel disegnare ... ebbe cosi' gran genio e talento, ch'egli medesimo poi dir soleva agli amici, che se in quell'eta* [a Firenze e a Pisa] *fosse stato in poter suo l'eleggersi professione, avrebbe assolutamente fatto elezione della pittura. Ed in vero fu di poi in lui cosi' naturale e propria l'inclinazione al disegno, e acquistovvi col tempo tale*

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10 Ibid., 68.
11 Ibid., 74, n. 91. Giovanni Bardi led the Florentine Camerata which was in the vanguard of the reform of music.
12 Drake, S., 1978, p. 449.
13 See Palisca, C., "Humanism and Music," *Renaissance Humanism - Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, v. 3. Philadelphia, 1988, pp. 463-465, and 477.
14 The mathematics student "attracted the attention of Ferdinando II, who recommended him to Galileo. Viviani resided with Galileo at Arectri from October 1639 as his pupil, amanuensis, and assistant. ... He published many mathematical books and edited the first collected edition of Galileo's works." Drake, S., 1978, p. 470.

esquitezza di gusto, che 'l giudizio ch'ei dava delle pitture e disegni veniva preferito a quello de' primi professori da' professori medesimi, come dal Cigoli, dal Bronzino, dal Passignano, e dall'Empoli, e da altri famosi pittori de' suoi tempi, amicissimi suoi ... ."[15]

On June 26, 1612, Galileo wrote a letter to Cigoli regarding the question of which was more admirable, painting or sculpture. He, in a typically beautiful bit of Galileian reasoning, argues that "*e' tanto falso che la scultura sia piu' mirabile della pittura, per la ragione che quella abbia il rilevo e questo no, che per questa medesima ragione viene la pittura a superar di maraviglia la scultura: imperciocche' quel rilevo che si scorge nella scultura, non lo mostra come scultura, ma come pittura.*"[16] Galileo goes on to explain, utilizing (in addition to his own brilliant thoughts) some Caravaggesque notions and some physical observations which almost paraphrase Patrizi's notions regarding the dimensions of bodies and the mind's perception of those dimensions. He begins, for example, with a surprising definition of painting:

> "*Intendesi per pittura quella facolta' che col chiaro e con scuro imita la natura. Ora le sculture tanto avranno rilevo, quanto*

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[15] Viviani, V., (Flora, F., ed.) *Vita di Galileo*. Milano, 1954, p. 28ff. The relationship between Caravaggio and Cigoli is not entirely clear. Baldinucci (cited in Chappell, M., "Ludovico Cardi called Il Cigoli," *The Age of Caravaggio* [Gregori, M., ed.]. New York, 1985, p. 136) reports that Cigoli "would accompany Passignano and Caravaggio to the taverns in order to not criticize the actions of the former or suffer the persecutions and very strange mind of the latter.". Chappell, p. 136, notes that "despite their cool personal relationship, artistic exchange between Caravaggio and Cigoli is evident, at least in the latter's work." Cigoli assisted Galileo by recording the appearance of sunspots, and he painted the moon beneath the feet of the Madonna in the Cappella Paolina *Immaculate Conception* from a description provided by Galileo.

[16] Panofsky, E., *Galileo as a Critic of the Arts*. The Hague, 1954, p. 32.

> *saranno in una parte colorate di chiaro et in un'altra di scuro.*[17] *E che cio' sia il vero, l'esperienza stessa ce lo dimostra; perche' se esporremo ad un lume una figura di rilevo, et anderemola in modo colorendo, col dar di scuro dove sia chiaro, sinche' il colore sia tutto unito, questa rimarra' in tutto priva di rilevo."*[18]
>
> *"... Non ha la statua per esser larga, lunga e profonda, ma per esser dove chiara e dove scura. Et avvertasi, per prova di cio', che delle tre dimensioni, due sole sono sottoposte all'occhio, cioe' lunghezza e larghezza (che e' la superficie, la quale da' Greci fu detta 'epifania', cioe' periferia o circoferenza), perche' delle cose che appariscono e si veggono, altro non si vede che la superficie, e la profondita' non puo' dall'occhio esser compresa, perche' la vista nostra non penetra dentro a' corpi opachi.*[19] *Vedi dunque l'occhio solamente il lungo e 'l largo, ma non gia' il profondo, cioe' la grossezza non mai. Non essendo dunque la profondita' esposta alla vista, non potremo d'una statua comprender altro che la lunghezza e la larghezza; donde e' manifesto che noi non ne vegghiamo se non le superficie, la qual altro non e' che larghezza e lunghezza, senza profondita'. Conosciamo dunque la profondita', non come oggetto della vista per se' et assolutamente, ma per accidente e rispetto al chiaro et allo scuro."*[20]

It has been noted here before how similar a number of Galileo's writings are to Patrizi's. In the current context, the excerpt above bears comparison with a portion from Patrizi's *Pancosmia*:

> *"In each body, therefore, of whatever sort, mathematical or natural, three dimensions will be found, which are recognized both by the mind and the senses. For who has not perceived in any body before him, the dimension from up to down, and the one from right to left, and likewise the one from front to rear? These are sometimes changed with respect to us, so that what was above is below, what was on the right is on the left, and likewise, what was in front is in the back. But none of these dimensions disappears in such a change. For length, breadth, and depth endure until the destruction of that body. No one ought still to doubt that these three dimensions, acknowledged by everyone, are inherent in every natural body, and the property of every body.*
>
> *"But I maintain, in addition, that they exist in all 'corporeal things,' that is, in all those that extend throughout bodies, either their wholes or parts, one or several. Now I give the name 'corporeal things' to what are called qualities - heat,*

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[17] Patrizi, interestingly, had defined color as "*lux opaca.*" Brickman, B., *An Introduction to Francesco Patrizi's Nova de Universis Philosophia*. New York, 1941, p. 30.

[18] Panofsky, E., *Galileo ...*, p. 32.

[19] The third of Patrizi's bodies was that of "the opaque," through which light cannot pass. See p. 51 above.

[20] Panofsky, E., *Galileo ...*, p. 33.

> *cold, whiteness, blackness, etc.. For they occupy either the inside and outside of bodies as a whole, or their parts. That is, they either cover the surface, or else penetrate the depths and thus extend also through those three dimensions and 'spaces.'... But the dimensions in corporeal things differ from those in bodies themselves, in that the latter are properties of the bodies, while the former are not properties of the qualities. For qualities have no quantity, size, length, or depth per se and by their nature, but only by accident, in that they extend through bodies, which have quantity and size, and are three-dimensional."*[21]

The cross-currents of thought in Patrizi and Galileo, and the appearance in Caravaggio's Del Montean works of Patrizian treatments of light and space, are fascinating and yet we know of no direct correspondence between the parties involved. Del Monte's friends at the Oratory must have, at the very least, known of Patrizi. The Giustiniani certainly did know Patrizi, and Benedetto's reaction to Patrizi's philosophy seems not to have been overly critical.[22] Federico Borromeo received a dedication in the *Nova philosophia* and, as Firpo reported, "not a single dissenting voice" was heard among the prelates.[23] Borromeo, moreover, was a correspondent and defender of Galileo. Another who received a dedication was Cardinal Paleotti with whom Del Monte shared the position of cardinal-protector to the Accademia di San Luca.[24] Gualdo is an intriguing figure directly connected with Caravaggio, Del Monte, the Oratorian Paravicino, Pinelli, and Galileo. If he didn't know Patrizi, he should have!

It is clear that Caravaggio's Del Montean period was critical to his development as a painter, and to the intellectual process that Mina Gregori observed at work. Caravaggio seems to have been exposed to and

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21 *Pancosmia*, Book I (*De spacio*), 62-a. Brickman, B., trans., "On Physical Space; Francesco Patrizi," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 (April, 1943), 228

22 Benedetto may even have been sympathetic to Patrizi's position as the Index opted to seek the advice of a hard-line Jesuit instead.

23 See p. 64 and n. 35 above.

24 Hibbard, H., *Caravaggio*. New York, 1983, p. 30, n. 15.

to have assimilated some of the advanced thought which, as evidenced by the affinity of both Del Monte brothers for Galileo, appears to have been a fixture of the Del Monte household for quite some time.

Spezzaferro presents a couple of letters which, while not relating specifically to Caravaggio, may help to clarify the relationship between Caravaggio and Cardinal Del Monte as artist and patron. The first two were sent in 1582 to Duke Francesco Maria II from his minister in Rome, Baldo Falcucci. In the first letter Falcucci reports that a young painter named Antonio Cimatori was to be sent to Rome by the Duke to study with Zuccari, but he could not do so as Zuccari had left Rome. Falcucci conferred with Del Monte and reports Del Monte's opinion that *"non vi sia persona di conto eccetto Scipion da Gaeta* [Pulzone]*, che non lo pigliarebbe facendo l'ecc(ellentissi)mo, et (non) conosce* [Del Monte] *miglior strada per lui che venir in Roma in casa mia o d'altri et attender a copiare et pigliar domestichezza con alcuni valent'huomini in questa professione."*[25] In the second letter, the Duke's minister writes that the artist is hard at work painting and that Del Monte is recommending works to be copied. Spezzaferro makes two main points regarding these letters. First, that Del Monte " - *almeno nell'ambiente roveresco* - " seems to have been considered an expert whose opinions were reported to, and accepted by, Francesco Maria II.[26] The second point expressed by Spezzaferro is *"il fatto che egli segue da vicino l'educazione artistica del giovane pittore, cosi' da far pensare che il suo interesse per i fatti artistici non fosse solo astratto, ma che si esplicasse anche in concreto."*[27]

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[25] Spezzaferro, L., "La cultura del cardinal Del Monte ...," 69.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

From 1599 comes another letter, this time from Del Monte to Christine de' Medici. *"Mando a V.A.S. il presente ritratto della Sig.ra di Parma (se pero' e' vero quello che si dice) non sapendo che cosa piu' grande ne' piu' bella mandarli di qua, et lo mando ancora, accio' la veda l'eccellenza del pittore che e' un giovane mio allievo .... ."*[28] At the very least then, by 1599 Del Monte was of the opinion that his relationship to the painters he patronized had become something more on the order of a teacher/student, or mentor/student relationship.[29] This corresponds with the period in which Del Monte "discovered" Caravaggio and brought him into his household. It's entirely possible, therefore, that the transition that one sees in Caravaggio's works during the Del Monte period - - the introduction of Patrizian elements of light and space being part of it - - is directly attributable to the tutelage of the cardinal himself.

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[28] Ibid., 80, n. 118. The letter was originally published by Heikamp, D., "La Medusa del Caravaggio e l'armatura dello Scia' 'Abbas di Persia," *Paragone*, 199 (1966), 64.

[29] By this time Del Monte was well-established in the Fabbrica of St. Peter's and the protectorship of the Accademia.

CONCLUSION

In the foreword to his *Caravaggio Studies*, Walter Friedlaender observed that while the Renaissance, as a whole, has been well studied with regard to aspects of cultural change, *"very little has been done in recent times to illuminate the general situation in Rome from about 1580 to 1620, even though this period is of great interest for later developments."*[1] Friedlaender's statement made nearly twenty years ago is today still essentially true. Moreover, I would add to it Kristeller's view that although Renaissance *"achievements in political and religious history, in the arts and in literature are rightly famous, its contributions to the history of philosophy are less widely known."*[2] This is especially true for the late Renaissance where the pattern of study tends to skip from Ficino and Pico della Mirandola,[3] to touch briefly upon Giordano Bruno and then land smartly at the doorstep of René Descartes.[4]

One wonders why this should be so. Clearly, at the very least from the view of the history of science, Telesio and Patrizi's names should be written large in Galileo's great book of the universe. Perhaps it is precisely because a thinker like Patrizi is transitional, is not entirely original, that we tend to overlook him and his contemporaries. To do so impoverishes our own knowledge of this important period in a peculiarly modern way - - a way prepared for us,

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[1] Friedlaender, W., *Caravaggio Studies*. Princeton, 1974, p. xii.
[2] Kristeller, P.O., "Renaissance Philosophies," *A History of Philosophical Systems* (Ferm, V., ed.). New York, 1950, p. 227.
[3] More often now it is Machiavelli who is studied. This, perhaps, tells us something about our own era.
[4] In the United States, Galileo gets consigned, more often than not, to the scrap-heap of introductory physics courses.

perhaps, by people like Patrizi himself - - which implies that anything which is not <u>entirely</u> new must, of necessity, be antiquated and obsolete. The study undertaken here is a first attempt to redress the situation, and to focus attention upon late 16th century thought. By turning more to the philosophy of the time, and coupling this with the on-going studies of the period's theology, perhaps we might come to better understand Caravaggio's startling new vision, while also nearing a greater comprehension of the phenomenon of "naturalism"; an interest and a concern which has far-reaching ramifications for later art - - that of 19th century America, for example - - but which is still largely ill-defined and poorly understood.

As Kristeller noted, *"a thinker like Patrizi deserves a good deal of attention ... . He shows us once more that a tradition does not live merely by repetition, but by a continuous transformation of its basic ideas. The old heritage is constantly being rethought, adapted, and supplemented in order to incorporate new insights and to solve new problems."*[5] Many of these same concepts could be applied to the art of Caravaggio, who, after the examples of the High Renaissance and its alter-ego Mannerism, must have thought "where are we to go from here?" His answer, it seems, was formulated by a process similar to that employed by Telesio and Patrizi; far-sighted, but in some ways unsure.

However it happened to come about, it seems fair to say that Caravaggio arrived in Rome from northern Italy with the rudiments of his novel style in place. This approach to painting surely had a basis in the rather dramatic, observational manner of the Lombard masters

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[5] Kristeller, P.O., *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance.* Stanford, 1964, p. 126.

discussed earlier, mixed with a Venetian sense of color assimilated either first hand or secondarily. If Peterzano had any influence upon the young painter, aside from technical matters, it seems to have been mostly negative; that is to say, that Caravaggio probably made a conscious decision <u>not</u> to follow his lead.[6]

Through Peterzano, however, Caravaggio must have encountered the ideas of Lomazzo. Lomazzo's concepts of painted light, of "moti," of coarse apostles, and his references to "good moderns," while at the same time praising the Venetians and artists like Correggio, Raphael and Leonardo must have had a strong resonance for Caravaggio. We see glimmers, too, of this approach to painting in some of Caravaggio's early, tentative Roman works as was noted, for example, with regard to the *Concert*. One wishes, however, that more of his early Rome works had come down to us in an authoritative manner, as his known pre-Del Montean *corpus* is disturbingly problematic.

It is with the Del Montean works that we first obtain a real sense of Caravaggio's development. We are fortunate, furthermore, in having texts which shed a considerable amount of light on the matter. Baglione is particularly valuable in relating a perceived development from "dal naturale" in the case of the *Concert*, to "vivo and vero" with regard to the *Luteplayer*. He also notes that this development is tied to a different use of light, more specifically a heightened effect of shadow, in Caravaggio's paintings. The result of this shift, implied although not specifically mentioned by Baglione, is precisely (as Spezzaferro wrote) that of giving "realta‘ spaziale al vuoto."

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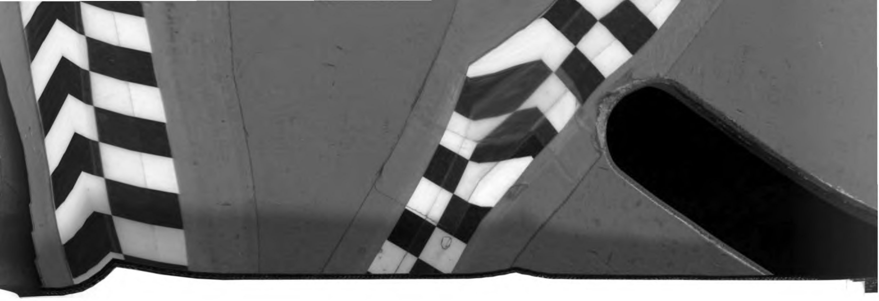
6 For a discussion of the all-too-overlooked problem of influence and how one is to account for it, see Hermeren, G., *Influence in Art and Literature*. Princeton, 1975.



This subtle shift on the part of Caravaggio is telling, for he is no longer working within the confines of Lomazzo's more painterly theories but more along the lines of contemporary philosophies of nature, particularly that of Francesco Patrizi.

It is attractive to speculate that the works by Caravaggio which first captured Cardinal Del Monte's attention had a quality about them which was consonant with the philosophical/scientific interests of both the cardinal and his brother. Indeed, if one considers the similarities of Lomazzo's Neo-Platonic theories to those more advanced, yet decidedly Neo-Platonic, theories of Patrizi and others[7] which Del Monte must have been familiar with, it is not at all difficult to imagine Del Monte's interest being piqued by Caravaggio's startling imagery.

This study opened with the quotation from Roger Fry that Caravaggio, in essence, was the first modern artist and that he "was the first to proceed not by evolution, but by revolution; the first to rely entirely upon his own temperamental attitude, and to defy tradition and authority." Aside from the allusion to Caravaggio's well-documented brushes with the law,[8] the statement could equally be applied to either Telesio - - Bacon's "first of the moderns"[9] - - or to Patrizi, who urged that one should "not be frightened by great names" and that the

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[7] There is much Platonic theory to be found in the writings of Galileo, but the issue is very much undecided. See Geymonat for an interesting and balanced discussion.

[8] Caravaggio's lengthy Rome police record and his skirmishes on Malta and elsewhere clearly indicate that something in his makeup was entirely conducive to finding trouble on the streets. What's interesting, however, is that few (if any) similar reports can be tied to his professional activities. When any of his canvases were rejected, for example, he simply got on with a replacement. One wonders how coolly Michelangelo would have reacted under similar circumstances.

[9] See p. 35, n. 16 above.

testimony of the senses should be employed.[10] In practice, as we have seen, both Caravaggio and these philosophers were more indebted to the past and respectful of authority than they let on - - a wise position given the fates of Giordano Bruno and, later, Galileo - - nor were they entirely dependent upon the observation of nature.

This precarious stance "tra il devoto, et profano" in the words of Cardinal Paravicino[11] is, in many ways, unsettling. As Kristeller noted with regard to Patrizi, "*the mixture of physical science with metaphysical and theological speculation ... is certainly strange for a modern reader ...* [but] *Patrizi lived and wrote at a time when the emancipation of physical science from philosophy had not yet been achieved ... .*"[12] Yet, Caravaggio and the philosophers did assert an independence from tradition whether real or not; a radical, perhaps unprecedented (and entirely "modern") stance which smacked of heresy to the less-enlightened and/or those with entrenched positions to protect, whether artistic or theological. Moreover they backed up their words by producing original works which, while based upon tradition, had an uneasy, new edge to them.

Telesio, Patrizi and Galileo all believed that what they were pursuing was in the best interests of the Church, and they said so. Caravaggio must surely have felt the same way, as well as his patrons and admirers, many of whom had crossed paths with both Patrizi and Galileo. Interestingly, the reaction of authorities to the artist and the philosphers has a striking similarity. Bellarmino's response, for example, to Clement VIII regarding the perceived dangers of Platonism -

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10 Page 47 and n. 55 above.
11 Page 68 and n. 54 above.
12 Kristeller, 1964, p. 120.

- that it was deceptively similar to Christianity and, therefore, more dangerous than paganism - - has a parallel in the responses of various clerics to the "naturalism" of Caravaggio's rejected works such as the *Death of the Virgin,* and the apparently more acceptable classicism (paganism?) of paintings such as Annibale Carracci's Farnese ceiling. The Platonist-oriented Oratorians, by contrast, looked favorably upon Caravaggio. More interesting, perhaps, and almost entirely overlooked, is that the Augustinians of S. Agostino - - no strangers to the theory of illumination - - seem to have had no problem at all in accepting Caravaggio's stunning *Madonna di Loreto,* despite the outcries of Baglione and others.

The matter of Caravaggio's "naturalism" is one which still needs serious attending to if we are ever to make fully plain the artist's intentions or to understand in the proper context the assessments of him by his contemporaries. Central to the problem is the definition of the term "nature." Aristotle, who was after all, the first real natural scientist, said quite simply that nature was *"the essence of things."*[13] Since then, the word has gone through so many changes and permutations that one hardly knows what it means.[14] With Caravaggio, then, we need to better ascertain what terms like "nature" and all its derivatives were understood to mean in his time. What "nature" meant, for example, to Cardinal Del Monte would be helpful in shedding some light upon what

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13 *Metaphysics,* IV, 4, 1015 a 14. McKeon, R., ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle.* New York, 1966.

14 The implications involved, for instance, in applying Aristotle's definition to as seemimgly as harmless a phrase as "he is, by nature, an outstanding late-inning pinch-hitter with men in scoring position," are mind-boggling.

it was that he saw in Caravaggio's works put up for sale by the art dealer Valentino.

"Nature," as with "space" and "void," seems to have been a real problem in the latter stages of the sixteenth century and on into the seventeenth. The entire accepted fabric of virtually everything known (a fabric which, for the most part, dated to antiquity) must have, seemingly, been coming apart thread by thread. The study of nature, ultimately, threatened to tear it all asunder, taking the Church with it and offering in replacement a cloth of unknown shape and quality.

Although we don't know what nature meant for Caravaggio, we do know what it meant for Patrizi. Utilizing a Neo-Platonic *schema* known through Augustine and which finds expression also in Galileo, Patrizi contends that God is concealed to us and that we only know of Him feebly through His *"lights."*[15] A plurality of beings, as discussed earlier, emanates from God, divided into the incorporeal and the corporeal. These grades of being partake of one another (*participatio*),[16] through the process of *"'inter-illumination,' through which beings are illuminated, come into existence* [occupy space], *and are known. ... Nature, in this scheme, is the animating principle of the world and all things in it."*[17] Nature, therefore, as an emanation from God, carries with it a semblance of the Divine all the way down to the meagerest of creations - - be they bare-footed peasants, androgynous youths, tax collectors or visionary painters prone to violence. Patrizi's *"world of nature,"* Brickman tells us, *"is not despised; it, too, is touched with*

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[15] Brickman, 1941, p. 32.
[16] A concept widely used in Plato (*methexis*). See *Phaedo* 100d and *Parmenides* 130c-131a. Also in Proclus.
[17] Brickman, B., *An Introduction to Francesco Patrizi's Nova de Universis Philosophia*. New York, 1941, p. 34.

divinity."[18] Perhaps this was of some solace to Caravaggio, who later, Susinno reports, admitted that "*i miei* [peccati] *son tutti mortali.*"[19]

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[18] Ibid., p. 58.

[19] Susinno, in Hibbard, H., *Caravaggio*. New York, 1983, p. 384.

FIGURES

Figure 1: Simone Peterzano, *Entombment*. S. Fedele, Milan. (Gregori, M., ed., *The Age of Caravaggio*. New York, 1985, p. 74.)

Figure 2: Caravaggio, *Concert of Youths.*
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
(Hibbard, H., *Caravaggio.* New York, 1983, Fig. 15)

Figure 3: Caravaggio, *Luteplayer*. Hermitage, Leningrad. (Hibbard, H., Caravaggio. New York, 1983, Fig. 18)

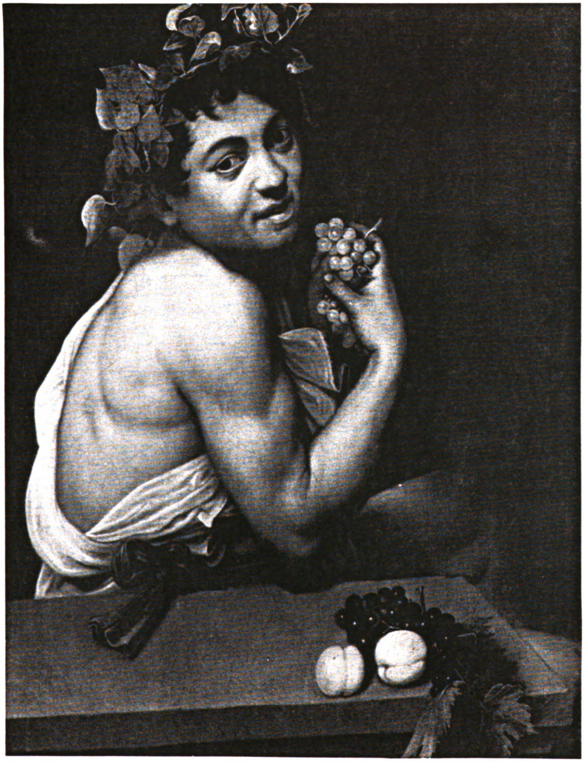

Figure 4: Caravaggio, *Bacchino Malato*.
Galleria Borghese, Rome.
(Gregori, M., ed., The Age of Caravaggio. New York, 1985, Fig. 1)

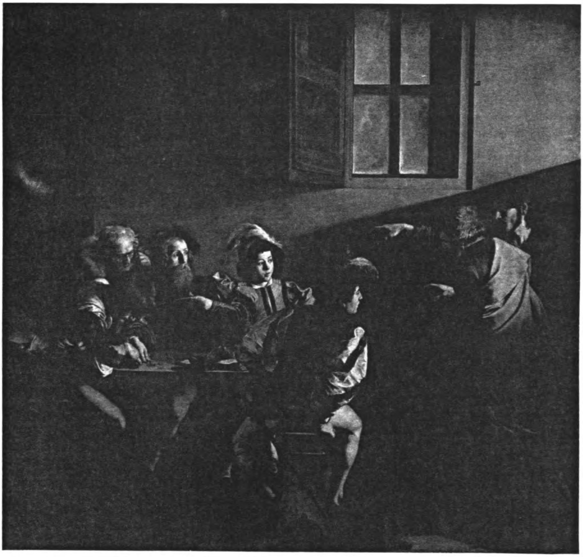

Figure 5: Caravaggio, *Calling of St. Matthew.*
S. Luigi dei Francesi, Rome.
(Gregori, M., ed., The Age of Caravaggio. New York, 1985, Fig. 4)

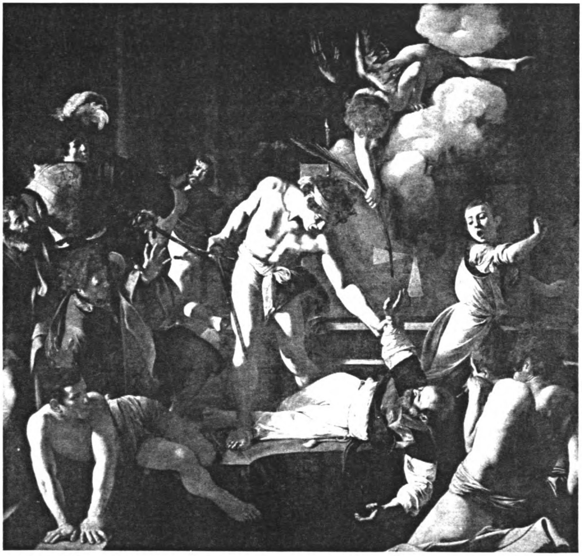

Figure 6: Caravaggio, *Martyrdom of St. Matthew*.
S. Luigi dei Francesi, Rome.
(Gregori, M., ed., The Age of Caravaggio. New York, 1985, Fig. 5)

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