Caravaggio

Reflections and Refractions

Edited by Lorenzo Pericolo and David M. Stone

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Caravaggio and the "Truth in Pointing"

Jonathan Unglaub

In his life of Caravaggio, Giovan Pietro Bellori envisions a scene where several artists have gathered on the Quirinal Hill. One of their company, unaware of his impudence, presumes to instruct Caravaggio on the basis of artistic imitation in the famous sculptures of antiquity, like the *Dioscuri* looming before their eyes:

> Thus, when he was shown the most famous statues of Phidias and Glykon so that he might attune his study to them, he gave no response other than pointing his hand towards a crowd of people, thereby gesturing that nature provided him with enough masters. To lend authority to his words, he called a gypsy who happened to be passing by in the street, and after escorting her to his lodgings, he portrayed her in the act of predicting the future, as is the custom of these women of Egyptian race; he made there a young man, who places his hand with his glove on his sword and offers the other hand uncovered for her to hold and examine; and in these two half-figures Michele so purely transcribed the truth that his claims were validated.[1]

There is, of course, much to unpack in Bellori's anecdote. Though fabular, it conveys fundamental insights into Caravaggio's concept of nature and truth in art, which has its concrete realization in the two paintings of the *Fortune Teller* (Figs. 8.1 and 8.2).[2] The gypsy vignette pithily conveys what Bellori expounds elsewhere: "whenever Caravaggio came upon someone in town he liked, he was satisfied with that invention of nature without further exercising his brain," and consequently, "the instant the model was taken from his own eyes, his mind and hand remained empty."[3] The earlier critiques of Karel van Mander, Giulio Mancini, Giovanni Baglione, and Francesco Scannelli similarly counterposed Caravaggio's unflinching fidelity to quotidian nature and his disavowal of selecting the best models to forge a synthetic beauty and stage conceptualized pictorial narratives.[4] According to Bellori, Caravaggio, in his absolute obedience to the model, claimed that "his brushstroke was not his own, but nature's, and repudiating all other rules, he reputed not being bound to art as the highest form of artifice."[5]

8.1
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Fortune Teller*, Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome, oil on canvas, 115 × 150 cm.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

As Todd Olson has recently argued, Bellori's gypsy anecdote and its corollary censure of Caravaggio's indiscriminate "verism" mask deeper anxieties. Olson posits a relation between Caravaggio's representations of the socially marginal—whether in stock genre subjects or through the insistent physicality of plebeian models—and the implicit, albeit performed, lack of artifice in their portrayal, as evinced in the fractured materiality of composition and surface. In crafting a "reality effect," Caravaggio exposed the tensions and stratification of class and gender, resulting in an eruption of the abject and the material that challenged the legitimating boundaries of genre scenes, not to mention subverting the unitary discourse of sacred history painting.[6] Far from simply articulating a classicizing prejudice or a derogation of low-life painting, Bellori's gypsy tale captures the polemical basis of Caravaggio's naturalism. As Charles Dempsey has compellingly stated, Caravaggio's realism is not so much an effect as a "new and radically conceived *vero*, one that directly mirrored the raw data of experiential reality."[7] It not only disavows the idealizing synthesis of canonical models; it also negates any notion of conceptualizing the particular truth of the here and now into the *verosimile*. This generalized and plausible notion of reality found its naturalistic realization through a rational system of colored marks on the canvas that accommodate

perceptual processes. Opposed to this verisimilar macular naturalism, Caravaggio specular realism captures, indeed mirrors, a fundamentally subjective view of truth, which Bellori denounces precisely because it is arbitrary and random in its subversion of conventions and ideals.[8] Like Narcissus's reflection, it is potentially a deception.[9]

The way in which the *Fortune Teller* sets up Bellori's anecdote and its critique of Caravaggio's subversive mimesis found earlier echoes in the poetic responses to this painting. The well-known madrigal by Gaspare Murtola, written in Caravaggio's lifetime, compared the artist's disarming naturalism in rendering the encounter, such that the figures seem to breathe, to the enchantress's own seductive and deceptive wiles.[10] That Caravaggio's astonishing fidelity to truth both dupes and beguiles the viewer, much as feigned clairvoyance captivates the hapless and smitten youth, re-emerge in a trio of madrigals on the painting written by Ottavio Tronsarelli some three decades later.[11] The writer, a prominent Roman poet who was fundamental in the development of opera in Rome, is perhaps best known for transforming Giambattista Marino's *Adone* for the operatic stage in the *Catena d'Adone* of 1626. This addition to the corpus of early literary responses to Caravaggio was written, ironically, by the very writer who helped edit *Le vite dei pittori, scultori ed architetti* of the painter's arch-nemesis, Giovanni Baglione, and composed the prefatory apostrophes.[12] Yet even the hostile Baglione, and later Bellori, conceded the enticement and vitality of Caravaggio's coloring in this work.[13] Likewise, Tronsarelli posits its stunning "verism" and vivacity as the visual equivalent of the fabricated truths that the girl utters and the dandy believes: "She hardly lacks in deceptions, if she appears truthful to him, and alive to you." As Tronsarelli detects, the stunning palpability and seeming physical vitality of the pictorial actors situates the beholder in a position equivalent to the smitten and credulous youth, rather than a detached observer of the perfunctory comic spectacle.[14]

8.2
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Fortune Teller*, Musée du Louvre, Paris, oil on canvas, 99 × 131 cm, detail.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

This discussion focuses on two factors of Bellori's gypsy anecdote: Caravaggio pointing to a random crowd and how the final painting demonstrates his capturing empirical truth. There is, of course, a

difference between the use of pointing for extracting a pretty face to star in an enchanting deceit and for the gestural enactment of a pictorial drama or the affirmation of spiritual dogma. Since Alberti first invested pointing with a demonstrative function in the interlocutory figure, artists employed indexical gestures not only to enact a narrative contingency among pictorial actors, but also to stress the veracity of Christian doctrines, such as the Incarnation, the Transfiguration, the Advent, and the sacred presence in the Eucharist, or affirm more generally divine volition or cause.[15] How does this didactic and histrionic device, crucial to the legitimating rhetorical purpose of painting, operate in the context of Caravaggio's vaunted commitment to indiscriminate "verism"? Ferdinando Bologna, criticizing the scholarly movement to christen Caravaggio's religious painting as the cipher of official Counter-Reformation piety, suggests that his "zero degree" naturalism might rather embody Erasmus's notion that "the truth has an intrinsic force which no artifice can equal." Even when depicting the Saints one should not flinch from "some failing, or perhaps we might say, a scar. I do not know why, but their examples succeed in moving us more deeply, when it proves that they mended their ways."[16] It is not simply unalloyed verism, but a related resistance to didactic clarity that problematizes Caravaggio's sacred paintings with regard to the Counter-Reformation art theory of Gabriele Paleotti and others that mandates immediate legibility, based, in part, on hallowed iconographic formulas. As Lorenzo Pericolo suggests, Caravaggio's deliberate obfuscations and "pictorial dislocations" can embody, ironically, both a more apt expression of the mysterious truth of divine revelation and the limitation of human sense and reason to apprehend it.[17] To orient this question to the motif at hand: is there a way to reconcile Caravaggio's seemingly random or misaligned pointing and the manifestation of theological truth in his works? Do the demonstrative and deictic functions convey narrative perspicuity or ambiguity? How does the enactment of pointing reify spiritual vocation in the *Calling of Saint Matthew*, bodily resurrection in the *Doubting Thomas* and the *Raising of Lazarus*, and the Incarnation in the *Madonna of the Rosary*?

Undoubtedly the most fraught and contested instance of pointing in Caravaggio's oeuvre is the Contarelli Chapel *Calling of Saint Matthew* (Fig. 8.3 and Pl. 13).[18] In one of Caravaggio's earliest completed and exhibited public religious narratives, pointing is invested with a solemn narrative and spiritual value. One wonders if Bellori's gypsy anecdote slyly actualizes Caravaggio's *mise-en-scène* here, as Christ glides past and extends his hand to summon the apostle from among "the heads portrayed from nature," whose type, costumes, and arrangement around the table derive from the early genre scenes. Bellori designates the central bearded man, "who leaving aside the counting of money, with a hand on his chest, turns toward the Lord" as the future Evangelist.[19] Caravaggio's followers, when painting the same event in their varied adaptations of the master's

8.3 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, oil on canvas, 322 × 340 cm.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

8.4
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, oil on canvas, 322 × 340 cm, detail.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

composition, by and large cast this figure as Matthew (Fig. 8.4).[20] Yet both Bellori and Caravaggio's epigones impose clarity and resolution upon a fundamentally ambiguous staging, an ambiguity that emerges from the very gesture conventionally deployed to clarify, acknowledge, and manifest. As modern scholarship has long recognized, Christ's beckoning gesture derives, *pace* Bellori, from an exalted prototype: Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*. Yet Caravaggio endows Christ not with the decisive charge of God the Father, but with the passivity of Adam's receptive hand (Fig. 8.5).[21] While this aptly casts Christ as the new Adam, the limp gesture undermines the purpose of the Lord's hand to call out, to target, to point with accuracy. Caravaggio thereby elects "to imbue this most meaningful interpictorial moment with fundamental ambiguity," as Peter Burgard states, further noting that Caravaggio's left–right re-orientation of Michelangelo's encounter suggests a deliberate obfuscation.[22] On the other hand, given Saint Jerome's liturgy for Saint Matthew, perhaps Caravaggio intuited that Christ's inherent magnetism obviates the imperative for gestural precision:

> Moreover, the glory and majesty of the hidden God, which shone somewhat through the face of the Man Jesus Christ, were enough to draw them which gazed thereon, even at first sight. For if there be in a stone a magnetic power which can make rings and straws and rods come and cleave thereon, how much more must not the Lord of all creatures have been able to draw unto Himself them whom he called?[23]

This profound conception of Christ's allure and divine will, underscored by the radiant shaft of redemptive light, broaches the contentious issue

of who exactly responds to this magnetic charge. However spiritually resonant, the passivity of Christ's pointing displaces the indexical function onto the receiver, namely the central, prominently illuminated, bearded figure, whose emphatic pointing gesture answers Christ's hovering hand. Since Bellori, this gesture had generally been read as one of self-referential acceptance of Christ's summons. Yet the figure's quizzical facial expression renders his gesture less decisive, even hesitant before the vocation. As Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit put it: "Matthew repeats Christ's pointing as question"; they also suggest that the real subject of the painting is "Matthew's puzzled response to the call."[24] This, of course, contradicts the magnetism of Christ's summons, which Caravaggio aptly characterizes as split-second and mid-stride through the kinetic pose of Christ. Caravaggio, if nothing else, is the painter of instantaneity. His specular naturalism would appear tailored to Matthew's immediate response, as dictated by scripture and described in the *Golden Legend*, which quotes Saint Jerome's metaphor of a magnet attracting iron to characterize the apostle's inevitable, reflexive obedience to Christ's summons.[25] Indeed the 1591 contract for the Contarelli Chapel, originally drafted for the Cavaliere d'Arpino but passed onto Caravaggio, states that Matthew "rises with desire to follow Our Lord who, passing along the street with his apostles, calls him to the apostolate." It further stipulates that the actions of the newly beckoned disciple should display "all of the artifice of the painter."[26] For Caravaggio, did this translate into the all-too-mundane and human response of the seemingly targeted bearded figure? As fellow painter Joachim von Sandrart would observe: "Matthew, as if afraid ... lays the other hand on his chest, and his face reveals the shock and shame he feels because he is unworthy of being called by Christ to the apostolate."[27]

How, then, to reconcile the bearded figure's conspicuous pointing with his dubious expression? Beginning with Andreas Prater and Angela Hass, and continuing with Thomas Puttfarken and Peter Burgard, a strain of the Caravaggio scholarship has interrogated whether the bearded figure can truly be Matthew, citing his evident hesitancy.[28] These dissident scholars argue that the bearded merchant's finger is not bent back and upward at the knuckle in self-reference. Rather, his gesture echoes and lends greater acuity to Christ's raised hand, pointing decisively to the left and down toward the hunched figure cast in shadow at the end of the table (Fig. 8.4). Consumed in counting the coins that his bearded companion disburses with his right hand, while his left clutches a purse beneath the table, this figure, as Matthew the publican, has not yet received the light of redemption. Nonetheless, the luminous shaft caresses his nose and will flood his countenance the instant his head rises and accepts, unstintingly, his summons and conversion.[29] Furthermore, Hass notes the similarity in physiognomic type, if not age, with the Evangelist in the first rejected Saint Matthew altarpiece, and the mutual placement of Matthew on a Savonarola chair, among other analogies (Fig. 8.6).[30] This alternative interpretation,

8.5
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, oil on canvas, 322 × 340 cm, detail.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

powerful as it is, demands a marked degree of immersion and projection on the part of the beholder, who must probe beyond the seemingly self-evident designation of the centrally placed, gesticulating, and illuminated bearded figure as the apostolic protagonist.

Needless to say, there are many vehement advocates of the traditional identification of the bearded merchant as Matthew, citing the early description of Bellori and the concurrence of artistic responses.[31] Irving Lavin claims that the alternative reading undermines the potency of the shaft of light that traces the trajectory of Christ's pointing, whereas the traditional view has it culminate in the face of Matthew, as it does in the Cerasi Chapel *Conversion of Saint Paul*. Furthermore, the physiognomic traits of the conventional Matthew conform to Jewish stereotypes that render the figure an exemplary convert, reflecting both the Church's evangelizing of the ghetto and the need to exculpate Cardinal Contarelli's own legacy from charges of embezzlement.[32] Given the French nationality of both the patron, Matthieu Cointrel (Contarelli), and the church, San Luigi dei Francesi, Maurizio Calvesi relates the spiritual resonance of Caravaggio's chiaroscuro to the papal bull of absolution for Henri IV Bourbon, which glosses the erstwhile Huguenot King's expedient conversion as a paradigmatic passage from the "obscurity of error and heresy" to the "light of Catholic truth."[33] The same dialectic, it must be said, can be projected upon the alternative Matthew, about to raise his face to confront and accept the light of redemption. For Michael Fried, the pose of the bearded Matthew consolidates a succession of simultaneous instances—grasping coins with his right hand, quizzical facial expression and gesturing with the left, and his legs almost imperceptibly shifting into a rising position beneath the table—all in "hypnotic" reaction to Christ's gesture, its very imprecision underscoring its magnetic potency.[34]

Most scholars defer to the near consensus of pictorial and critical tradition in interpreting the action of Caravaggio's narrative. Yet as Thomas Puttfarken has contended, in a brilliant if not necessarily convincing study, this legacy might also be misleading. In the Contarelli Chapel pictures, Caravaggio plays on the beholder's expectation that a painting stages a narrative in a perspicuous

8.6 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, formerly Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin (destroyed), oil on canvas, 223 × 183 cm.

(Photo: bpk, Berlin / Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin / Art Resource, NY)

8.7
Raphael (Raffaello Santi), *Death of Ananias*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, oil on paper, 340 × 530 cm.

(Photo: V&A Images / The Royal Collection, on loan from HM the Queen, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, GB. Photo: London / Art Resource, NY)

manner conforming to compositional conventions. In Raphael's *Death of Ananias*, for instance, the central elevated placement, clear illumination, compositional focus, and overt gesticulation designate the protagonists (Fig. 8.7). At the crux of a network of pointing, Paul definitively extends his finger heavenward to indicate the divine cause of the mortal punishment that Peter manually transmits. Such structures predispose the beholder to follow Bellori and identify the pivotal figure with a conspicuous gesture as that of the apostle, who responds to Christ's call in a dramatic circuit. But only scrutiny of what Caravaggio literally transcribes—Christ's magnetic summons, the alternative target of the pointing gesture, the activity of the bearded figure as paying rather than collecting, the play of light upon the hunched, hoarding figure—reveals the possibility, even plausibility, of an alternative scenario. What Puttfarken proposes is that the conventional pictorial structure masks a vision of quotidian reality, which extends Caravaggio's "verism" to a radical notion of pictorial disposition.[35] At base, the traditional reading of the composition and its coordinates of pointing is a deception, like the beauty of the gypsy fortune teller and her mimetic simulation.

Concurrent with Puttfarken, other scholars have acknowledged the possibility of the alternative reading. Pamela Askew interprets this narrative ambivalence in terms of embedded temporalities. The traditional view of the centrally placed, gesticulating Matthew enacts the summons theatrically in historical time; the hunched and youthful peripheral figure articulates the enduring resonance of Matthew's conversion in the here and now.[36] Burgard

8.8
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (attributed to), *The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew*, Hampton Court, London, oil on canvas, 132 × 163 cm.

(Photo: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty the Queen)

detects a programmatic ambivalence at play—equally viable alternative Matthews, Christ's enigmatic gesture, historical time and contemporary setting, interior and exterior locale—that resists definitive resolution.[37] While deferring to the traditional Matthew, Pericolo emphasizes that the painting's dislocations originate not with the apostolic response but the beholder, including Caravaggisti artists, confronting the ambiguous representation of the divine and the "suspense effect" of an indeterminant summons. Christ shrouded in shadow, his gesture imprecise, his body and gait shielded by Peter, and the indifference to his presence among many of the company challenge the very notion of sight as a means of spiritual verification, and the pictorial conventions that typically enable this.[38]

Additional considerations only exacerbate the ambiguity of Matthew's identity. The "who, me/him?" gesture reappears in subsequent works. In the Naples *Seven Acts of Mercy* (Fig. 7.8), the innkeeper at the far left of the composition adopts a nearly identical gesture, through which he clearly directs the pilgrims past himself to the left, presumably to the location of lodgings.[39] Alternatively, in the *Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew* (Hampton Court, London), wherein Denis Mahon and others now see Caravaggio's hand, the same red-bearded model appears as the summoned Andrew (Fig. 8.8). He clearly points to himself in marked contrast to the traditional Matthew, which might suggest, by contrast, the sideways targeting of the latter's gesture.[40] But in terms of spiritual obeisance, the unquestioning submission to Christ's magnetic summons must also apply to Andrew's vocation, perhaps suggesting

Il tracciato, riportato sulla foto della stesura definitiva, permette di visualizzare i reinterventi del Caravaggio, in particolare le modifiche del gruppo Cristo-Pietro, scoperti dalle moderne radiografie.

8.9
Radiograph and reconstruction of first state of Caravaggio's *Calling of Saint Matthew*, from Dell'Acqua and Cinotti's *Il Caravaggio e le sue grandi opere*, 1971 (Figs. 94 and 95)

that "who, me?" is a viable response, at least in Caravaggio's quotidian conception of religious calling. There is thus no reason why Caravaggio might not have envisioned Matthew's more exemplary conversion in similar terms.

While not as radical as the revisions in the *Martyrdom of Saint Matthew*, radiographic analysis of the *Calling* reveals a marked evolution in the figure of Christ and his gesticulation (Fig. 8.9). He initially stood alone, pivoted toward the table group and pointed decisively downward in a trajectory toward the hunched youth.[41] The revisions reorient and activate Christ's body outward, introducing the passive Michelangelesque gesture and the resulting ambiguity. The changes, I think, enhance the plausibility for the traditional identity of the saint, though not enough to render it definitive. Might the revision and obfuscation of the gesture correlate to the notorious replacement of the chapel's altarpiece? Caravaggio's initial altarpiece was apparently rejected for its indecorous portrayal of a crude and seemingly illiterate Evangelist wedged cross-legged into a Savonarola chair, his arm intertwined with that of an alluring angel, who literally guides his hand in the formation of Hebrew script. The more suitable second version, still *in situ*, features a different, dignified model, alert and elegantly posed on a stool, as he transcribes the angelic dictation.[42] The hunched, youthful Saint Matthew on the Savonarola chair would thus mirror the first, rejected *Saint Matthew and the Angel*: his brooding fixation on the coins his fingers count would evolve into the elder's wide-eyed absorption in the divine Word taking shape through his guided hand. The definitive altarpiece allows for a freer association with

either Matthew candidate. Calvesi suggests that the trumpeted conversion of the Huguenot Henri of Navarre, the ultimate patron of the French national church, would have mandated a mature and bearded Matthew to facilitate this evocation. Similarly, the awkward insertion of the clunky Saint Peter in the final composition, who mimics Christ's gesture even as he impedes his forward gait, conspicuously, if awkwardly, inserts the Roman Church into the drama.[43] Neither potential Matthew figure is altered in the revisions, although either could be credibly summoned. We can envision Christ pointing to one or the other, which might alter the thematic of the conversion in each case, but not its fact and spiritual potency. Might pointing to the random crowd, to the motley ensemble around the counting table, from which any sinner could be summoned, suggest that the truth in pointing might be indeterminacy itself? Likewise, in the *Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew*, Caravaggio counters Andrew's self-acknowledging gesture by charting an opposite left–right trajectory from Peter's fish, past his arced drapery and open hand, through Christ's emphatic double pointing to anonymous masses beyond the frame, whence the brothers will summon further disciples as "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:18–20). Much as Caravaggio's own pointing to a crowd demonstrated the basis of his art in the arbitrary truth of nature, so too does spiritual vocation derive its validity and veracity from the very randomness and potential universality of its activation.

There can be no doubt that pointing finds its target of manifest truth in the Giusitiniani *Doubting Thomas* (Fig. 4.1 and Pl. 12). Upon the verification of the wounds of his resurrected body, Christ states, "Blessed are thou Thomas, for thou hast seen and believed. Blessed are those who see not and still believe" (John 20:19). Since visual trajectories, as evinced in the fixed gazes of the adjacent apostles, here manifest the blind faith that Thomas lacks, Caravaggio displaces Thomas's incredulity onto the baser sense of touch through Christ's jabbing grasp—probing not only the corporeal truth of the resurrection, but the embedded materiality of the body of painting.[44] As Pericolo acutely observes, the trajectory of Thomas's gaze veers away from the wound. Thus the haptic confirmation of physical pointing stimulates a mental picture of the divine truth of resurrected bodily presence, much like that materializing before the spectator through Caravaggio's art. Indeed, the way the gesture probes the rupture elides the surfaces of flesh and canvas, thereby interrogating representational veracity despite its unflinching naturalism, testing the beholder's visual credulity much like that of Thomas.[45]

Elsewhere, Caravaggio reorients the pointing gesture outward to the beholder—the random crowd beyond the frame. In the *Raising of Lazarus* (Fig. 8.10), Christ's gesture reprises the Michelangelesque magnetism of the *Calling of Saint Matthew*—though here the levitating body of Lazarus is the clear target.[46] But within the shadow of death, Christ's other hand points past the tomb slab and out of the picture, extending the validity of post-mortem resurrection to those witnessing the painted miracle.

8.10
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Raising of Lazarus*, Museo Regionale, Messina, oil on canvas, 380 × 275 cm.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

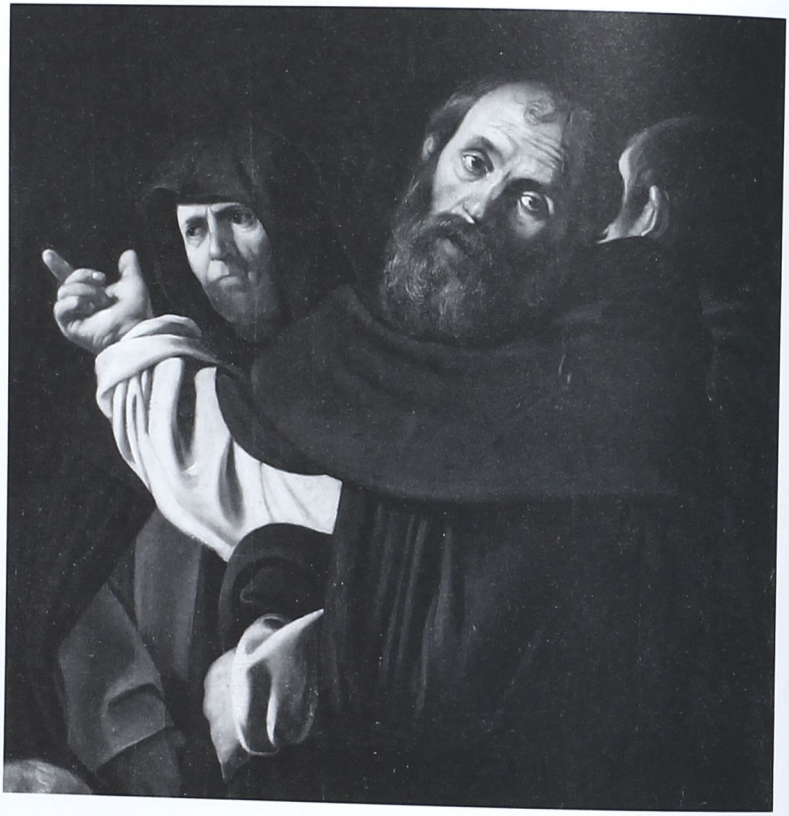
In the Mattei *Supper at Emmaus*, Christ's gesture is typically read as blessing the bread, through which he reveals his identity to the pilgrims (Fig. 2.2). But while the hand may resolve into a benediction in the next instant, Christ points outward, almost compelling the leftmost disciple's backward propulsion out of the picture and imploring the random worshiper to recognize the atypically beardless Lord in his "alternative effigy" and Eucharist manifestation.[47] Furthermore, as Pericolo has shown, the gesture conforms to that appearing in triumphant images of the resurrected Christ, and thereby discloses the existential state of the protagonist to the beholder in synch with the pilgrims' own recognition.[48] Yet however symbolically

8.11
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna of the Rosary*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, oil on canvas, 364.5 × 249.5 cm.

(Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY)

inflected, Christ's right-hand gesture is still one of pointing, as comparison to the nearly identically left hand of the Lord in the lost Giustiniani *Agony in the Garden* attests.[49] In the *Emmaus*, *Agony*, and *Lazarus* alike, Caravaggio punctuates the enacted spiritual event, the *istoria*, with the deictic gestural beckoning of the anonymous spectator, for whom its truth resounds as a private spiritual revelation.

Coordinated pointing animates Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary* (Fig. 8.11 and Pl. 14), broaching clear hierarchies of spiritual status, and differentiating degrees of visionary seeing, as in many *Sacre Conversazioni* or, as Christian Kleinbub has shown, in Raphael's *Transfiguration*.[50] As such, the



8.12
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna of the Rosary*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, oil on canvas, 364.5 × 249.5 cm, detail.

(Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY)

work is often viewed as retrogressively traditional, even though its original destination is unclear: an abandoned commission for the Duke of Modena or, more plausibly, a Colonna or vice-regal commission for Naples. All we know for certain is that the painting, whose dimensions and format presuppose a commission as a public altarpiece, ended up on the market in Naples after its completion.[51] Based on the earlier cases of the *Death of the Virgin* and the *Palafrenieri Madonna*, a rejection seems likely, but why? As with the *Death of the Virgin*, the uncompromisingly physical, albeit completely orthodox, affirmation of Marian doctrine may have irredeemably breached decorum. In both works, the taut scarlet curtain emblematizes Mary's role as the loom of the Incarnation; the flesh of Christ woven from pure blood of her womb.[52] Saint Peter Martyr, his head cleaved open by homicidal heretics, points to the Madonna to avow this truth of the material bond between inviolate Mother and divine Child. In earlier Lombard depictions of his martyrdom, the wounded saint is typically shown extending his index finger to scrawl the letters "Credo in unum Deum" from the Nicene Creed with the blood issuing from his head wound, just as the executioner is about to unleash the death blow.[53] In Caravaggio's altarpiece, the blood droplets on the Saint's cowl

evoke the final profession of faith in one God born of a Virgin, making his pointing tantamount to the blood oath: *Credo*—I believe (Fig. 8.12). Just two years hence, Caravaggio would appropriate the sanguineous testimony of bloody script to validate his monumental staging of the *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (Co-Cathedral of Saint John, Valletta).[54] Peter's credulous finger uncurls toward the infant Christ, shown hovering between Mary's thighs—no ledge is clearly visible, even if presumed present—in testament to his miraculous virginal issuance. Mary is still swollen as the flesh of her womb grasps his own stomach: a *pentimento* reveals its once greater tumescence. The child's face expresses a pronounced queasiness and unease—perhaps intended, like the crossed legs, to evoke the fated Passion. Nonetheless, the crude physicality of gesture and expression evokes hunger, infirmity, or worse, pangs of childbirth, which would be blasphemous in association with the Virgin Mary, absolved of all sin, and especially exempted from Eve's punishment of painful parturition.

The elevated, though not clearly enthroned Virgin points to the random crowd, now incorporated into the "working space" of the painting, and extending notionally outward to encompass the beholder.[55] Pointing, she deputizes Saint Dominic to distribute the Rosary, the prosthesis of illiterate and innumerate devotion, of humble belief in transcendent truth. As in the *Madonna of Loreto* (Sant'Agostino, Rome; Fig. 8.13), Caravaggio extends the outward thrust of the Virgin's intercessory pointing through the projecting, filthy feet of the faithful, which, extending to the threshold of the image, anchor devotion in material endurance and the humble contact with the earth.[56] As Pamela Jones has shown, the projecting and soiled appendages of the *Madonna of Loreto* not merely index Caravaggio's critically insupportable breaches of artistic decorum, but also inscribe the sacred image with the pervasive poverty of the faithful pilgrims. As such, they point to the humble truth, much as Bellori has the artist gesture to the teeming crowd to proclaim artistic veracity.[57] Helen Langdon similarly suggests that the surging masses and their groping gestures might have come across as too vivid, especially in their proximity to the elegant ruff-collared donor, in a city afflicted by endemic poverty and an unruly underclass, a fact that the uncharacteristically ancient costumes of most of the supplicants hardly masks.[58] Yet in the *Madonna of the Rosary*, the prominent feet symbolically point to virginal purity and the enduring sanctity of martyrdom. In the *Golden Legend*, Jacobus de Voragine assigns Peter Martyr the sobriquet, "one who takes off his shoes," since "he drew off all earthy love from the feet of his desires as one would take off a shoe." Voragine's account concludes with the tale of a cripple who heals himself by rubbing his feet with earth, invoking that which once absorbed the bloody testament of the fallen martyr.[59]

Despite the association of bare feet and sanguineous pointing with veritable purity, divine presence, and the unfailing affirmation of truth in the Saint Peter Martyr legend, for Baglione and Bellori the soiled feet metonymically index the tattered, even desecrating, material objects, not to mention the

8.13 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna of Loreto*, Cavalletti Chapel, Sant'Agostino, Rome, oil on canvas, 260 × 150 cm.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

socially marginal actors, of Caravaggio's indiscriminate *vero*.[60] To extend the metonymy further, these sullied feet might summon the famous philosophical debate on the humble object in art, its empirical naturalization, the self-referentiality of the maker and exegete, and positing truth within/out the frame of the representation. In his essay *Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing*, Jacques Derrida deconstructs the exchange between Martin Heidegger and Meyer Schapiro on a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, *Old Shoes with Laces*, and what constitutes its referent in reality (Fig. 8.14). Derrida's title refers not to manual pointing, but pointing or "*pointure*," the mechanics of stitching and pressing in the manufacture of shoes, and by extension, the binding and interlacing of depicted subject and physical material in the work of art.[61] This process, of course, still remains indexical, and thus points. Heidegger extricates the work of art from the transcendental, and instead argues how it epitomizes the working or "equipmental" being of its referent through its very detachment from a context of labor and production. As such, the truth the painting posits is that of the peasant whom the open shoes evoke: "the toilsome tread of the worker stands forth. In the stiffly solid heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge ... in the shoes there vibrates the silent call of the earth."[62] Schapiro dismisses what he sees as Heidegger's projection, and insists that the shoes be restituted to Van Gogh, whether the artist's own shoes or, more significantly, his subjective artistic vision of

8.14
Vincent van Gogh, *Old Shoes with Laces*, Vincent van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, oil on canvas, 37.5 × 45 cm.

(Photo: Art Resource, NY)

them as truth.[63] This debate, I think, evokes issues raised in Caravaggio's insistence to align spiritual truth and revelation with strategically ambivalent gestures of pointing. The early critics fixated on the filthy feet and other elements of material atrophy—tearing jerkins, rusting armor—as emblematic of Caravaggio's subversive realism, admitting the mundane and socially fraught that were incompatible to a work of art as then conceived.[64] But for Heidegger, such evocation of the peasant and labor was pivotal to art's role as a "setting-itself-into-work of truth."[65] Schapiro's restitution might parallel our expanding sense of the constructed quality of Caravaggio's realism, whether Puttfarken's hypothesis of Caravaggio manipulating compositional paradigms to subvert and disclose, or Michael Fried's conception of Caravaggio's works indexing the artist's bodily immersion in their making and rupture upon beholding them.[66]

Derrida slyly questions whether Van Gogh depicts a pair, since mismatched samples would undermine both Schapiro and Heidegger's attempt to restore the shoes to the bearer or the borne.[67] Instead it is the very process of pointing, pricking, interlacing that embeds the depicted object and its veritable references to the materiality of the artwork. Shoes, to begin with, are *parerga*, accessories (hors d'oeuvres), to their bodily referent, however defined, much as Derrida's concept of the "parergonal" frame both delimits and determines the work of art.[68] Caravaggio's soiled feet are so conspicuously fetishized in their reference to what ought not be in-framed as painting that they both transgress and elide into the delimiting frame, thereby interlacing the crude and the quotidian into the hallowed work. Similarly, the pointing, upon which Caravaggio's compositions and, if we believe Bellori, his very concept of painting hinge, posits truth in randomness or physicality, precisely what convention and decorum would exclude from the privileging frame. In the end, Derrida upholds Heidegger's locating the truth of the work in the toil of the peasant woman whose feet have filled the rugged shoes, but also views their representation as a catalyst for Van Gogh's self-identification with the subject of his own painting, given the artist's well-attested commiseration with impoverished laborers.[69] Likewise, Bellori's characterization of Caravaggio's pointing to and arbitrarily choosing his subjects, as well as the critic's disdain for the plebeian epitomized in his condemnation of the liminal feet, disclose the very gesture and motif whereby the artist inscribes the "work of truth" onto the surface of painting.

Notes

1 Bellori, 214–15: "Laonde, essendogli mostrate le statue più famose di Fidia e di Glicone, accioché 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. E per dare autorità alle sue parole, chiamò una zingara che passava a caso per istrada, e condottala

all'albergo la ritrasse in atto di predire l'avventure, come sogliono queste donne di razza egizziana: fecevi un giovine, il quale posa la mano col guanto su la spada e porge l'altra scoperta a costei, che la tiene e la riguarda; ed in queste due mezze figure tradusse Michele sì puramente il vero che venne a confermare i suoi detti."

2 Apart from specific points in the scholarly literature, I will simply refer to the entries on the works by Caravaggio under discussion in the most recent edition of the catalogue of Marini, which includes exhaustive references to earlier scholarship. On the two versions of the *Fortune Teller*, see Marini 2005, 403–04, 408–11, nos. 19, 22.

3 Bellori, 215, 230.

4 These early sources are gathered, in original language and translation in Hibbard 1983, 343–60. Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck* (Haarlem, 1604), in Hibbard 1983, 344: "he will not make a single brushstroke without the close study of life, which he copies and paints … For to paint after drawing, however close it may be to life, is not as good as following nature, with all of her various colors." Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (c. 1617–21), in Hibbard 1983, 350: "This school … is closely tied to nature, which is always before their eyes as they work. It succeeds well with one figure alone, but in narrative compositions and in the interpretations of feelings, which are based on imagination and not direct observation of things, mere copying does not seem to me to be satisfactory." Giovanni Baglione, *Vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti* (Rome, 1642), in Hibbard 1983, 356: "his beautiful style, which consisted in painting from nature; although in his pictures, he did not have much judgment in selecting the good and avoiding the bad." Francesco Scannelli, *Il microcosmo della pittura* (Cesena, 1657), in Hibbard 1983, 357: "He gave his works an extraordinary and truly singular imitation of nature, and an injection of force and relief greater perhaps than any other. Nevertheless, he lacked the necessary basis for good design, producing faulty creations without completely achieving a beautiful conception, gracefulness, decorum, architecture, perspective or other similar and significant elements that together render sufficiently worthy the true principles of the greatest masters."

5 Bellori, 229–30.

6 Olson 2006, 69–79, esp. 77: "For the authority of ancient sculpture and the ideal male body was substituted the 'mastery' of the crowd in the street and the abject, underclass female body. Bellori is clearly troubled by the problematic transmission of cultural authority." On the contrived basis of Caravaggio's evidently dispassionate realism, including his fixation on low-life details, Olson obliquely references Barthes's "reality effect," for which see Barthes 1986.

7 Dempsey 2006, 95.

8 For a probing exposition of the foregoing, see Dempsey 2006, 92–99, with further observations in Pericolo 2011, 58–65.

9 On Caravaggio's mirroring mimesis and the mythic origins of painting in the legend of Narcissus, see Damisch 1976, 113–146. On Poussin's contrary construction of a semiotic rather than specular image of Narcissus, see also Unglaub 2006, 72–79.

10 Murtola, no. 472: "Non so qual sia più maga / O la donna, che fingi, / O tu che la dipingi / Di rapir quella è vaga / Coi dolci incanti suoi / Il core e 'l sangue a noi. / Tu dipinta, che appare / Fai, che viva si veda. / Fai, che viva, e spirante altri la creda." The madrigal has been reprinted in the documents and sources

anthologies of Dell'Acqua and Cinotti 1971, 164; and Macioce 2003, 310 (no. F.3). On the cross-fertilization of Caravaggio's genre scenes and Marinist lyric, see Cropper 1991, 193–99; and Cropper 2006, 50–54.

11 See Tronsarelli (a), 12–13, transcribed and translated in the Appendix to this chapter (p. 175). These poems do not factor in the exhaustive Caravaggio documents and sources anthologies of Dell'Aqua and Cinotti 1971 and Macioce 2003. They are mentioned in passing in the studies on Giovanni Baglione by O'Neil 2002, 184; and Aurigemma 1994, 24–25, who transcribes them.

12 Tronsarelli's contemporary fame is attested by his inclusion in the literary encomia of Erythraeus, 3:147–52; and Allacci, 206–07. The most extensive early source on Tronsarelli is the eulogy recited in the Accademia de' Sterili at the poet's death in 1646: "Oratione funebre del Padre Francesco della Nunziata. Procuratore della Madre di Dio delle Scuole Pie," printed in Tronsarelli (b), 12–31. On Tronsarelli's contributions to Baglione's *Vite*, including the 22 Latin distichs that preface the work, his commissioning of Bellori's antiphon "Alla Pittura," and the latter's now discredited claim that the poet largely composed the *Vite*, see Aurigemma 1994, 23–25; O'Neil 2002, 180–84; and the prefaces by Jacob Hess and Herwarth Röttgen to Baglione, XI–XII, 34–36, which hypothesize the parameters of Tronsarelli's limited, though erudite, contributions. Tronsarelli's *La Catena d'Adone* (Rome: Corbelletti, 1626), scored by Domenico Mazzocchi, is recorded as having been performed at the palace of Evandro Conti in 1626. On its performance, with sets designed by the Cavaliere d'Arpino, see, with further references, Scarci 1994, 451–64. On Tronsarelli's other important contributions as a librettist, his Barberini associations, and importance for artists such as Poussin, see Hammond 1994, 200–201, and Unglaub 2006, 76–95.

13 Baglione (1642) in Hibbard 1983, 353; Bellori, 215–16.

14 Along these lines, see the probing analysis of the two *Fortune Teller* paintings in Pericolo 2011, 135–55, who observes how the veracity of the models, and the lyrical amorous intensity that seemingly transpires between them, displaces the narrative codes of comic theft and deceit inherent to the genre.

15 Alberti, 77–78: "I like there to be someone in the 'historia' who tells the spectator what is going on, and either beckons them with his hand to look … or points to some danger or remarkable thing in the picture." The notion of pointing as the demonstration of theological truth summons, among countless examples, works such as Filippo Lippi's San Lorenzo *Annunciation*, Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, *John the Baptist*, *Virgin of the Rocks*, *Virgin and Child with Saints Anne and John the Baptist* (cartoon), Raphael's *Disputa*, *Transfiguration*, and the tapestry cartoons of the *Blinding of Elymas* and the *Death of Ananias*. On how Leonardo's pointing gestures reify the incarnation, see Pye 2010, 4–17. On gesture and revelation within the earthly drama of Raphael's *Transfiguration*, see Cranston 2003, 18–22.

16 Bologna 1992, 90–91, quoting from Erasmus, *Eximii doctoris Hieronymi stridonensis vita* (Basel, 1516). On Caravaggio's thwarting of Counter-Reformation dictates on religious imagery, as propounded in Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (Bologna: A. Benacci, 1581–82), see Bologna 1992, 11–71.

17 Pericolo 2011, 199–209, esp. 209: "In Caravaggio's painting, divinity repudiates clarity and acts obscurely: in its unfolding, it surpasses man's understanding. Looking at the divine through Caravaggio's lens implies renouncing art's

pedagogic mission and doubting the visual heuristics that Counter-Reformation theorists construe as painting's innermost objective. Indeed, scripture's sense and meaning do not necessarily lie where the church and iconographic tradition have lodged them. This discrepancy is the reason for the inherently desacralizing charge of Caravaggio's religious narratives, not because the paintings deny God's presence and intervention, but because they expose man's limits in sensing, recognizing, and interpreting divinity."

18 Marini 2005, 441–42, no. 36; on the Contarelli Chapel as a whole: 430–44.

19 Bellori, 220: "Dal lato destro l'altare vi è Cristo che chiama San Matteo all'apostolato, ritrattevi alcune teste al naturale, tra quali il Santo lasciando di contare le monete, con una mano al petto, si volge al Signore; ed appresso un vecchio si pone gli occhiali al naso, riguardando un giovine che tira a sé quelle monete assiso nell'angolo della tavola."

20 On the legacy of the *Calling of Saint Matthew* in Dutch Caravaggist paintings on the same theme by Hendrick ter Brugghen (c. 1618–19, Musée de Beaux Arts, Le Havre, and 1621, Centraal Museum, Utrecht), Jan van Bijlert (1625–30, Oud-Katholieke Kerk, Utrecht), and Matthias Stomer (c. 1629, Fine Arts Museums, San Francisco), see Prater 1995, 58; and Blankert and Slatkes 1986, 88–92, nos. 7–8; 200–201, no. 40; 334–35, no. 75. The painting by Stomer propagates Caravaggio's ambiguity, as both a youthful bravo and a bearded and capped elder merchant respond to Christ's passing by. For a close analysis of the tell-tale responses to the ambiguities of the Contarelli *Calling of Saint Matthew* in these paintings and those of Caravaggio's Italian followers, see Pericolo 2011, 225–38.

21 Friedlaender 1955, 108–09; Hibbard 1983, 100.

22 Burgard 1998, 97–98.

23 Puttfarken 1998, 168, quoting Saint Jerome's interpretation of the calling in the *Breviarium romanum* and in the *Golden Legend*; for the latter see Voragine, 564–65.

24 Bersani and Dutoit 1998, 26; see also 18–20, 25–27, where these authors analyze Caravaggio's strategy of evoking the pictorial characters' disregard toward the central episode, wherein Christ's avocation is displaced to "the more boldly designed representation of Matthew as an astonished interrogation."

25 Voragine, 565: "For if a magnet has power to attract rings and bits of iron, how much more can the Lord of all Creation draw to Himself those whom He will."

26 For the contract, see the most recent and comprehensive compilation of documents on the Contarelli Chapel in Simonelli 2005, 130, doc. 5. See also Röttgen 1971, 18–35; and Dell'Acqua and Cinotti, 1971.

27 Joachim von Sandrart, *Academie der Bau-, Bild-, und Mahlerey-Künste* (1675), reprinted and translated in Hibbard 1983, 378.

28 On the Matthew question, see Prater 1985; Hass 1988; Prater 1995; Burgard 1998; Puttfarken 1998. For an overview of the debate, see Schütze I. 2000; a thorough summary and thoughtful evaluation is found in Pericolo 2011, 219–225.

29 De Marco 1982; Prater 1985, 70–74; Hass 1988, 247–48; Prater 1995, 53–61; Burgard 1998, 99–101; Puttfarken 1998, 169–73. On the pointing gesture of the central figure, the latter writes (172): "it is pointing at Matthew, translating Christ's divine and powerfully vague gesture into a more precise, human, perhaps even pedantic indication."

30 Hass 1988, 245–49. Additional thematic associations include the congruent positioning over Matthew's shoulder of the bespectacled money-lender, a symbol of spiritual blindness, and the angel, the source of revelation through the Divine Word, as well as the youth's hand grasping the purse being supplanted by the Angel guiding the writing hand of the elder Evangelist.

31 Although most scholars still accept the traditional identification, the most extensive refutations of the alternative hypothesis are Röttgen 1991 and Lavin 1993.

32 Lavin 1993, 90–99.

33 Calvesi 1990, 279–82. Calvesi references the papal bull commemorating the conversion authored by Silvio Antoniano.

34 Fried 2010, 198–201.

35 On the foregoing, see Puttfarken 1998, 163–74.

36 Askew 1996, 248–50, esp. 250: "It is Caravaggio's invention of double drama, his concept of a dramatic construction in which Matthew's vocation is given the potential of being re-experienced through time that is novel and, I believe, underlies the ambiguity. My proposal is that *both* callings are intended. One is a historical conversion, theatrically presented, the other is a contemporary one, privately felt."

37 Burgard 1998, 97–101.

38 Pericolo 2011, 219–41. Many Caravaggisti variants of the Contarelli composition, "a portentous machine of dissimulation and dislocation" (239), imply Christ's invisibility to all but the summoned one among the assembled casts populated by the master's types.

39 Prater 1995, 54.

40 On the Hampton Court painting, see Marini 2005, 455–56 (no. 46), who places it around 1601, and thus later than the Contarelli *Calling of Saint Matthew* of 1599–1600. See also the more extensive entry by Marini in Mahon 2007, 38–44.

41 On the radiographic analysis of *Calling of Saint Matthew*, see Dell'Acqua and Cinotti 1971, 110–113, figs. 94, 95; on the revisions, see also Marini 2005, 49–50.

42 On the Contarelli *Saint Matthew and the Angel* altarpieces, see Lavin 1974.

43 Calvesi 1990, 279–82.

44 On the *Doubting Thomas*, see Marini 2005, 460–61, cat. no. 50, as well as Danesi Squarzina 2001, 278–80, cat. no. D2. On the interrelation between the bilateral symmetry of the rhomboid composition, the evidentiary doubling of Christ's resurrected body as verified through Thomas's touch, and the mimetic mirroring of Caravaggio artistic creed, see the probing study by Pichler 2007, 26–33. On the pictorial thematic of sight reinforcing verifying touch, see Fried 2010, 83–5.

45 Pericolo 2011, 457–66.

46 On the *Raising of Lazarus* and its reprising of motifs from Caravaggio's earlier works, see Hibbard 1983, 243–45; and Marini 2005, 549–51, no. 97, with references to earlier studies. On the penumbral reprising of the Contarelli Christ, reinforcing the theme of visual ambivalence in representing Christ's divinity, see Pericolo 2011, 437–45.

47 Scribner 1977; on the unfurled gesture of Christ's hand, suspended in anticipation of grasping and blessing, see Pericolo 2007, 530–33; Pericolo 2011, 280–83. On how Caravaggio orients the drama outward toward the beholder through situating diagonally projecting *trompe-l'oeil* forms within the

traditionally static format of the devotional half-length, see ibidem, 527–31; 278–81. For further on the *Supper at Emmaus*, see Marini 2005, 456–58, cat. no. 47.

48 Pericolo 2007, 533–35; Pericolo 2011, 285–88, citing Marcantonio Raimondi's *Blessing Christ*, Cecco del Caravaggio's *Resurrection*, and Bartolomeo Cavarozzi's *Supper at Emmaus*, the latter of which grafts the Resurrected Christ onto the basic template of Caravaggio's composition. For further on Christ's multivalent gesture, see Lavin 2001, 639.

49 On the Giustiniani *Agony in the Garden*, destroyed in World War II, see Marini 2005, 491–92, cat. no. 67.

50 Kleinbub 2008.

51 On the origins of the *Madonna of the Rosary*, see Bologna 2005, 26–29; and Marini 2005, 512–17, cat. no. 77. On the possibility of a private vice-regal commission, sold when the Count-Duke Benevente returned to Spain, see Denunzio 2005, 52–55. For further on the iconography and donor portrait in the altarpiece, see Wolfgang Prohaska's entry in Prohaska and Swoboda 2010, 71–84.

52 On the scarlet curtain as symbolic of Mary as the carnal vessel of Christ, see, with ample theological references, Askew 1990, 110–22. On the excessive humility of the portrayal of the Virgin, in place of regal glorification, as the most likely cause of the rejection of the *Death of the Virgin* by the Carmelites of Santa Maria della Scala, see ibidem, 55–68. On the notion of Christ being woven from the flesh of Mary's womb in Patristic thought, see Constas 1995.

53 For the examples of Vincenzo Foppa (Sant'Eustorgio, Milan, 1466–68), Moretto da Brescia (painted for San Francesco, Bergamo, and now in Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan, 1530), and Moroni (Castello Sforzesco, Milan, 1560), see Panazza 1979, 91–93; and Meilman 2000, 105–07, 117. In Titian's famous altarpiece of the *Martyrdom of Saint Peter Martyr* of 1530 (once in Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice), the model for Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* in the Contarelli Chapel, the fallen saint extends one of his fingers, perpetually poised to begin the sanguineous affirmation of faith. The same finger also points to the manifestation of divine truth in the monstrance on the altar below, see Meilman 2000, 120, 128–32.

54 On the signature of the Malta *Beheading of John the Baptist* in relation to the iconography of Saint Peter Martyr, see Puglisi 1998, 306–07; on the Maltese context of the signatory blood oath, see Stone 1997, 169; for a more comprehensive analysis of the authorial, chivalric, religious, and poetic significance of the blood signature, see Stone 2012.

55 "Working space" is how Frank Stella defines what he sees as Caravaggio's singular contribution in realizing "the projective imperative of pictorial drama," which dissolves the threshold of the picture plane and engulfs the viewer emotionally and psychologically. In its seeming conventionality, the *Madonna of the Rosary* is the seminal example of Caravaggio's radical redefinition of pictorial phenomenology away from architecturally defined space and sculptural volume to the impression of real presence. See Stella 1986, 23–41. For a qualification of Stella's formal analysis that takes account of the devotional imperative of the worshipers' empathy and identification with the Madonna and saints, a connection that the Rosary itself emblematizes, see Danto 1993, 107–08.

56 For references on the Madonna dei Pellegrini, see Marini 2005, 487–90, no. 65.

57 Jones P. 2008, 95–121.

58 Langdon 1998, 333–35.

59 Voragine, 247, 259.

60 Bellori, 230–31: "Allora cominciò l'imitazione delle cose vili, ricercandosi le sozzure e le deformità, come sogliono fare alcuni ansiosamente: se essi hanno a dipingere un'armatura, eleggono la più rugginosa, se un vaso, non lo fanno intiero, ma sboccato e rotto. Sono gli abiti loro calze, brache e berrettoni; e così nell'imitare li corpi si fermano con tutto lo studio sopra le rughe e i difetti della pelle e dintorni, formano le dita nodose, le membra alterate da morbi … In Santo Agostino si offeriscono le sozzure de' piedi del pellegrino." Baglione (1642) in Hibbard 1983, 354: "In the Church of Sant'Agostino, he painted the Madonna of Loreto from life with two pilgrims; one of them has muddy feet and the other wears a soiled and torn cap; and because of this pettiness in the details of a grand painting the public ["popolani"] made a great fuss over it."

61 Derrida 1987, 274–84, referencing Heidegger 1964 [1950] and Schapiro 1994 [1968].

62 Heidegger 1964, 659–65 (663 quoted).

63 Schapiro 1994, 135–40. For a critique of this, see Derrida 1987, 359–70.

64 Bellori, 230–31. See n. 60 above.

65 Heidegger 1964, 665: "In the work of art the truth of what *is* has set itself to work. 'To set' means here: to bring to a stand. Something that *is*, a pair of peasant shoes, comes to stand in the work in the light of its being. The being of what *is* comes into the fixity of its showing. The essence of art would consequently be this: the setting-itself-into-work of the truth of what *is*."

66 Fried 1997, 18–23, 29–56. These ideas are much more extensively developed in Fried 2010, esp. 39–96.

67 Derrida 1987, 261–66, 332–45.

68 Ibidem, 301–05, esp. 304: "The frame makes a work of supplementary *désoeuvrement*. It cuts out but also sews back together. By an invisible lace which pierces the canvas (as the *pointure* 'pierces the paper'), passes into it then out of it in order to sew it back onto its milieu, onto its internal and external worlds. From then on, if these shoes are no longer useful, it is of course because they are detached from naked feet and from their subject of reattachment (their owner, usual holder, the one who wears them and whom they bear). It is also because they are painted: within the limits of a picture, but limits that have to be thought in laces. Hors d'oeuvre in the *oeuvre*, hors d'oeuvre as *oeuvre*: the laces go through the eyelets (which also go in pairs) and pass on to the invisible side. And when they come back from it, do they emerge from the other side of the leather or the other side of the canvas? The prick of their iron point, through the metal-edged eyelets, pierces the leather and the canvas simultaneously. How can we distinguish the two textures of invisibility from each other? Piercing them with a single *pointure*." For more on the *parergon*, see ibidem, 52–82.

69 Ibidem, 367–70, esp. 368: "peasant *and artisanal* 'ideology' in painting, concern for truth in painting ('But truth is so dear to me, and so is the seeking to make true, that indeed I believe, I believe I would still rather be a cobbler than a musician with colors' [Van Gogh]), that is what he [Van Gogh] shares with Heidegger, even if *his* 'truth,' at least in his *discourse*, remains representational … the 'projection' is at work in the choice of the model rather than in the analysis of it, once the exemplary corpus is that of Van Gogh. A certain analogy between Heidegger and Van Gogh, whatever its limit from other points of view, a certain community of 'pathos' paradoxically provided a support for identification which reduced by so much the risk of 'projection,' of hallucinatory delirium. The 'pathetic' paragraph on the silent call of the earth is consonant, in another correspondence, with this or that letter of Van Gogh."

Appendix

L'APOLLO di Ottavio Tronsarelli.
In Roma. Con Licenza de' Superiori.
Per Francesco Corbelletti. MDCXXXIV.

212. *Per un ritratto di zingara che dà la ventura ad un giovane*	*For a portrait of a gypsy, who reads his fortune to a youth*
Da la maga d'Egitto Che fosca nacque a frodi Entro tela eloquente Chiaro il susurro apprendi E note in lei non mentitrici godi. Anzi, s'il vero intendi, Ella nel vero a sé contraria mente E l'opre inganni sono, S'ha tenebroso il volto e chiaro il suono.	From within the eloquent canvas You hear the clear whisper Of the sorceress of Egypt, Born dark, apt to defraud, And take delight in her non-fallacious notes. And yet, if you realize the truth, She truly lies against herself: Such works are deceptions, If she has a shadowy face and a clear voice.

Sopra l'istessa	*On the Same*
L'Egizzia in questa tela Ha sì vivaci accenti Che, mentre sorti svela, Se ben ascolti, il proprio suon vi senti E lui sol folle credi Ch'a lei porger la fé mal cauto vedi. Oh donna ch'egualmente, Anco pinta nel lin, con tutti mente, Né mai d'inganni è priva, S'a lui sembra verace ed a te viva.	The Egyptian girl in the canvas Makes such vivid utterances that, If you were to listen closely While she unveils fortunes, You would hear her voice there, And you would consider foolish Him alone, whom you see trusting her Incautiously. Here is the lady who keeps lying to all, Even if just painted on linen. She hardly lacks in deceptions, If she appears truthful to him, and Alive to you.

213. *Per la medesima pittura del Caravaggio*	*On the same picture by Caravaggio*
Se la fosca indovina Pinta da man divina Al garzon che qui tace, Scopre arcano fallace, Pur anco ne le frodi Hebbe d'oracol vero altere lodi, Né sempre inganni finse, Ch'eternità predisse a chi la pinse.	Even if the swarthy fortune teller Painted by a divine hand Discloses a deceitful future To the youth, who here remains silent, She, despite her deceptions, deserves Lofty praises for her true oracle. Indeed, She has not always invented frauds, For she predicted eternity to him who Painted her.

12 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Doubting Thomas*, Stiftung Schlösser und Gärten Sanssouci, Potsdam, inv. GKI5438, oil on canvas, 107 × 146 cm.

(Photo: bpk, Berlin: Gerhard Murza / Art Resource, NY)

13 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, oil on canvas, 322 × 340 cm.

(Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

14 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna of the Rosary*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, oil on canvas, 364.5 × 249.5 cm.

(Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY)