

Transformations in Identity: Remaking the Image of a Cardinal Saint in Seventeenth-Century Rome

A pen and ink wash drawing *Ecclesiastic Seated before a Crucifix* (Fig. 1) in the British Museum was described by Nicholas Turner in his 1999 catalogue of the Museum's Roman Baroque drawings as by an anonymous hand, close in style to Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639–1709), the Genoese draughtsman and painter who was active chiefly in Rome.¹ To see how apt this comparison is, one need only turn to another drawing catalogued as attributed to Gaulli in the same publication, *Saint Augustine's Vision of the Trinity* (Fig. 2), in which there is the same lightness of touch and Baroque drapery style reminiscent of Bernini, as well as such distinctive traits as the abbreviated, s-curve lines in the silk fringes, and long, softly zigzagging lines for the texture of the folds or edges in fabric.² Interestingly, both drawings have had their contours incised for the transfer of their designs to prints. As Turner noted, a print corresponding to the *Saint Augustine's Vision of the Trinity* is known—an example is housed in the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf, while no corresponding print for the *Ecclesiastic Seated before a Crucifix* had been found at the time the catalogue was written.

As the style of the two British Museum drawings is similar, it is instructive to know how the *Saint Augustine's Vision of the Trinity* came to be attributed to Gaulli. The attribution of its composition to Gaulli had been proposed by the leading scholar of the artist's drawings, Dieter Graf,³ on the basis of its style. Clearly, the lively putti, dramatic light effects, and voluminous, sculptural folds of the drapery are Gaulliesque. Initially, though, Graf thought the drawing was a copy after the print. This is not difficult to understand, as the style of the drawing is more polished than is usually the case with Gaulli. The pen strokes are for the most part long, deliberate, and lacking the lively sketchiness of much of Gaulli's drawn oeuvre. However, Turner argued that the draughtsman's skill, the correspondence in size between the two images, their reverse horizontal orientation, and the general proximity of the drawing's style to Gaulli were indicative of the drawing's primacy. His arguments persuaded Graf, but not Ann Sutherland Harris, who in her review of Turner's catalogue maintained that the drawing is probably a copy after the print.⁴ She did not, however, account for the drawing's incised contours or its reverse orientation. Furthermore, a number of apparently minor features, taken together, militate in favour of its autograph character: the quill seems to have been drawn over the saint's thumb; similarly, the closed book beneath the putto's knee in the middle foreground seems to have been drawn over the edge of the book beside it; the absence of the iconographically important Hebrew tetragram in the print is more explicable in a preparatory drawing than in a copy drawing; and the reversal of the lion in the coat of arms of Pope Innocent XI in the drawing makes no sense heraldically, and so the drawing could serve little meaningful function as an image in its own right.

Supporting an association of the *Ecclesiastic Seated before a Crucifix* composition with Gaulli is the fact that virtually the same carving in the armrest of the cleric's chair is found in two painted portraits by the artist: the *Portrait of Cardinal Marco Galli* (Fig. 3) in the National Museum

of Art in Romania in Bucharest, and the *Portrait of Cardinal de Bouillon* in the Château at Versailles. Furthermore, the motifs of a partly-drawn curtain and fluted pilasters in the background of the drawing also appear in a number of Gaulli's ecclesiastical portraits, such as the *Portrait of Cardinal Giovanni Battista Spinola* in a private collection.⁵

An instance of a print made after a Gaulli drawing is the *Blessed Andrea Conti* engraving by Benoît Farjat in the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, apparently made after Gaulli's drawing of the subject in the Art Institute of Chicago.⁶ The style of the drawing is considerably freer than in the British Museum drawings in question. However, a much closer analogy in terms of drawing style may be made with the frontispiece attributed to Gaulli in the Pettini Collection in Rome. The *Santa Genuinda, or Innocence Triumphant over Deception* was made for a luxury edition of a musical manuscript commissioned by Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni in c. 1694. Gaulli's authorship was proposed by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco and supported by Dieter Graf.⁷ The latter noted that the design of the dragon relates to the same feature in a number of Gaulli's works. The technique of the frontispiece, consisting of an initial fine black chalk drawing, followed by outlining in pen with brown ink, with the addition of areas of grey wash, is similar to the technique of both British Museum drawings. Perhaps most significantly, the Pettini drawing contains the soft, parallel hatching in grey wash present in the British Museum drawings, but which is virtually absent from Gaulli's less finished drawings made in preparation for his paintings. Still, in one respect there is a distinctive Gaulliesque abbreviation in the drawing of the *Ecclesiastic Seated before a Crucifix*. A similar use of long zigzagging lines along the edges of the back of an ecclesiastical chair is found in Gaulli's drawing *Tournon's Mission Kneeling before the Pope* housed in the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf. It seems these kinds of lines were intended to give the impression of the loose threads of silk on the fabric upholstering the chairs. While the *Saint Augustine's Vision of the Trinity* and the *Ecclesiastic Seated before a Crucifix* are more finished than the majority of Gaulli's drawings, in this author's opinion, this is not sufficient reason to deny his authorship of them. The importance of a commission, or a patron, might well have dictated the degree of finish in a drawing to be inserted into a manuscript or made into a print.

This brings us to the question of the identity of the cleric in the British Museum's drawing. His mozzetta, the elbow-length cape covering his shoulders, indicates that he is a cleric of rank. But of what kind – a cardinal, bishop, abbot, canon, or lesser office? Somewhat ironically, a clue to answering this question, and identifying the subject, is the emblem incorporated into the architectural feature in the left background. For this is unmistakably the sign of the Society of Jesus, the order better known as the Jesuits. This is ironic because Jesuits make a promise at the time of their profession never to take any promotion outside the Society, unless forced to do so under penalty of sin (Constitutions S.J., Part X, No. 6 [817]). For this reason, there have historically been relatively few Jesuit cardinals. Those that there have been, were usually promoted out of necessity, particularly in developing regions of the church, or for their outstanding contributions to theology. The numerous

books at the cleric's table in the British Museum's drawing suggest that his promotion was probably as a result of his writing.

Thus, we are looking for a Jesuit theologian of high rank who might have been commemorated in Baroque Rome by an artist such as Gaulli. Gaulli certainly had no lack of Jesuit patronage. In the 1670s he executed the massive ceiling painting *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* for the General of the Society of Jesus, Father Giovanni Paolo Oliva, in the Gesù church in Rome. Furthermore, through Gaulli's connection with Bernini, he would have come into contact with other Jesuit patronage. Indeed, Bernini carved a marble torso of a noted Jesuit Cardinal in the same Gesù church, who was given the red hat for his theological writings: Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1542–1621). He is best known as one of the leading defenders of the Catholic Church of the Counter-Reformation, but also for his notification of Galileo of the church's unwillingness to accept the Copernican model of the solar system. His publications continued to appear for centuries after his death, and he was eventually made a saint, in 1930, and then a Doctor of the Church, in the following year.⁸

Numerous portrait prints are known of Cardinal Bellarmino, as they were included in editions of his works. Further, at least two painted portraits exist, the better of which was executed by Passarotto de' Passarotti (it belongs to the Society of Jesus, the Province of Toledo, Spain). Looking at the print (Fig. 4) made of the cardinal in 1604—that is during his lifetime—by Francesco Villamena (1566–1624), one might be inclined to exclude the possibility that it is the same man as in the British Museum drawing. Notwithstanding the similarities in their postures and environments (each is sitting at a desk, holding a quill, surrounded by books), the man in the print has deep-set eyes, a dark goatee, a stiffness to his posture, and a penetrating gaze directed at the viewer. The subject of the drawing on the other hand has light eyes, a light goatee, he holds his quill delicately with his little finger coyly arched, and looks devoutly at a crucifix before him. However, it must be remembered that Bellarmino died around eighteen years before Gaulli was born, by which time Bellarmino's appearance had begun to change, in more ways than one.

When Bernini came to carve the cardinal's torso, c. 1624, he had the potential advantage that the body had been exhumed only a few years before. Bellarmino had asked to be buried in a common grave with his fellow Jesuits, which wish was granted—for a year. His body was then removed to a more prominent resting place to the left of the main altar. Irving Lavin has argued that the unusual format of Bernini's sculpture, showing an extended torso rather than just a bust, may reflect a desire to emphasise the miraculous preservation of the cardinal's upper body as was recorded when it was disinterred, something that would have helped the Jesuits in their campaign to promote the cardinal to sainthood.⁹ Precisely how well preserved the cardinal's head was, and whether Bernini saw it remains unclear. In any event, Bernini's depiction is idealised, the smooth, pure white marble transforms the stern image of the cardinal in the print into a saintly figure.

Gaulli would have known Bernini's sculpture of Bellarmino. However, other evidence suggests another source may well have been used for the drawing here attributed to Gaulli: the engraving (Fig. 5) of Bellarmino by Johann Friederich Greuter (c. 1600–1660) that was published by Zannetti in Rome in 1624 in the *Vita del Cardinale Roberto Bellarmino*. For there are numerous obvious similarities between the posthumous print and the drawing. In each, the figure is in front of a crucifix at the left, and the emblem of the Society of Jesus appears between the crucifix and the man. Rather than scrutinizing the viewer, the subject now gazes devoutly at the crucifix. The heads are virtually identical, with the same receding hairline, hook nose, shallow eye sockets, and pale tufted goatee.

Knowing the subject's likely identity, the drawing's late seventeenth-century date, and probable Roman provenance, narrowed the parameters of a search for the print made after it considerably. It was therefore not too difficult to find it as the frontispiece (Fig. 6) to Daniello Barbaro's *Della vita di Roberto Cardinal Bellarmino Arcivescovo di Capua della Compagnia di Gesu'*, published by Nicolò Angelo Tinassi in Rome in 1678, a copy of which is in the British Library in London. The printed image is almost identical in size and composition (with a few minor simplifications and omissions) to the *Ecclesiastic Seated before a Crucifix*, only reversed, and in a somewhat harder style, and with the addition of an inscription along the bottom, reading: 'ROBERTVS CARD. BELLARMINVS E SOC. IESU'.¹⁰

Alas, neither the engraver nor the author of the composition is recorded in the print. However, as argued above, the composition is close to those of Gaulli's painted portraits of cardinals. Furthermore, it is also possible to argue for the primacy of the drawing over the print, for the same reasons as Turner adduced for the primacy of the drawing *Saint Augustine's Vision of the Trinity*: the quality of the draughtsmanship, the corresponding dimensions, reverse orientation, and stylistic proximity to Gaulli. Furthermore, where there are differences between the drawing of the cardinal and the print, the drawing is closer to Gaulli's style, as in the carving of the upright for the armrest of the chair. In the engraving, its bulbous form is plain, whereas in the drawing there is an indication of the kind of foliate decoration more clearly visible in Gaulli's paintings in Bucharest and Versailles. One might also note that the date of Barbaro's publication falls within the period of Gaulli's most important Jesuit patronage.

The transformation of Bellarmino's image over the years from a forbidding, even ugly figure, to a kindly, approachable one evidently had much to do with his cult, and the efforts to present him as a candidate for sainthood. Indeed, it is telling how Bellarmino's image becomes so much like the one of Ignatius of Loyola, on the wall in the background of Villamena's print. Ignatius was canonized just a year after Bellarmino's death. It is noteworthy, too, that between Villamena's and Greuter's prints Bellarmino's coat of arms on the back of his chair disappears. Although, in the latter work the chair's pine cone shaped pinnacle still refers to the pine cones in the cardinal's coat of arms. However, even this motif disappears in Gaulli's composition. Conversely, the emblem of the Society of Jesus appears

in Greuter's print and remains in Gaulli's version. Thus, Bellarmino's image gradually shifts from that of an individual to a figurehead for his order. The other notable shift in emphasis is from the depiction of the cardinal as a scholar interrupted at his work, into a prayerful figure contemplating the crucified Christ. This is a feature of the hagiography of scholar-saints, such as Saint Thomas Aquinas, who was said to have conversed with a crucifix while writing the *Summa theologica*. The intention, it would seem, was to suggest that Bellarmino's writing was divinely inspired. Bellarmino's image thus becomes as pious as the one of Ignatius in the background of Villamena's print, even if history shows that Ignatius' transformation into a saint was a speedy one, while Bellarmino's dragged on for centuries.

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¹ N. Turner, with the assistance of R. Eitel-Porter, *Roman Baroque Drawings c. 1620 to c. 1700*, 2 vols, London, 1999, vol. I, p. 215–16 and vol. II, no. 335. Accession no.: 1994-u-3. The provenience of the drawing is listed by Turner as: 'J. Richardson, jun. (L 1270); Miss Griffith.'

² Turner and Eitel-Porter, 1999, vol. I, p. 73, and vol. II, no. 115. Accession no.: 1946-7-13-863. The provenience of the drawing is listed by Turner as: 'Sir T. Lawrence (L 2445); S. Woodburn (sale, Christie's, London, 7 June 1860, lot 678, 'Solomon's idolatry, VENETIAN; St. Jerome writing, CRESPI; the Presentation, F. CURIA; Virgin and Child, SCHEDONE, &c.', bt with nine others, *Sir T. Phillipps, £1-8-0*); Phillipps-Fenwick; presented anonymously.'

³ Graf edited the catalogue of the largest repository of Gaulli drawings, housed in the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf: D. Graf (ed.), *Die Handzeichnungen von Guglielmo Cortese und Giovanni Battista Gaulli*, 2 vols, Düsseldorf, 1976.

⁴ A. Sutherland Harris, 'Nicholas Turner, with Rhoda Eitel-Porter, Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, Roman Baroque Drawings, c. 1620–c. 1700', *Master Drawings*, vol. XXXIX, no. 4, (Winter, 2001), 420–24, p. 423.

⁵ For the three painted portraits mentioned, see: M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, D. Graf, and F. Petrucci (eds), *Giovanni Battista Gaulli, Il Baciccio 1639–1709*, ex. cat., Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, 11 December 1999–12 March 2000, figs 5, 7, and 21.

⁶ D. Graf, 'Gaulli disegnatore' in M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, D. Graf, and F. Petrucci (eds), 1999–2000, 245–58, pp. 254–55.

⁷ M. Fagiolo dell'Arco, 'Premessa' in *Il Baciccio illustratore*, F. Matitti (ed.), Rome, 1994, 9–16, note 1 on p. 14; and D. Graf, 'Il Baciccio Autore dell'Antiporta della "Santa Genuinda"', in the same volume, pp. 33–38.

⁸ For general references on Bellarmino, see: D.S. Schaff, 'Cardinal Bellarmine: Now Saint and Doctor of the Church', *Church History*, vol. II, no. 1, March 1933, pp. 41–55; and J. Brodrick, *Robert Bellarmine: Saint and Scholar*, second revised edition, London, 1961 (original edition, London, 1928).

⁹ I. Lavin, 'Five New Youthful Sculptures by Gianlorenzo Bernini and a Revised Chronology of his Early Works', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. L, no. 3, September 1968, 223–48 (pp. 242–43).

¹⁰ British Library, London, shelf mark 1224.h.1. The dimensions of the frontispiece print image, without the inscription, are 16.9 cm high by 11.8 cm wide, while those of the corresponding British Museum drawing are 17.1 cm by 11.6 cm.