

Joseph Connors, “Francesco Borromini. La vita (1599–1667),” in *Borromini e l’universo barocco*, ed. RICHARD BÖSEL, CHRISTOPH L. FROMMEL, exh. cat. (Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1999–2000), Milan, Electa, vol. I, 1999, pp. 7–21

Borromini’s life began and ended at the water’s edge.¹ He was born in Switzerland in 1599 a hamlet lapped by the wavelets of the lake of Lugano, and he died, by suicide, in a house overlooking the Tiber.

The town of Bissone had been under Swiss dominion for eighty years when Borromini was born there on 27 September 1599.² The territory around the lake of Lugano had been part of the duchy of Milan under the Visconti and their Sforza successors, but in the chaos following the invasion by the French in 1499 and their subsequent withdrawal the Swiss pushed steadily southward, stopping only when defeated by the French at Marignano in 1515. Thus came to be formed the jagged and illogical boundary that still separates modern Italy and Switzerland.³

1. The seventeenth-century lives of Borromini are:

Giovanni Battista Passeri (d. 1679; first edition 1772)

Jacob Hess, ed., *Die Künstlerbiographien von Giovanni Battista Passeri* (Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana, XI), Leipzig and Vienna, 1934 (reprint Worms am Rhein, 1995), pp. 359-66

Bernardo Castelli Borromini, *Nottitia*, 10 June 1685, in Florence, Bibl. Naz. Centrale, Cod. Magliab. II II 110, fols. 36r and fols. 170r-171v (*Bibliography*: Hempel 1924, p. 6, n. 1; Passeri-Hess, 1934, p. 361, n. 2; S. Samek Ludovici in *Archivi*, 1950, p. 77; Thelen, *Francesco Borromini: Die Handzeichnungen*, p. 96, n.1; and Wittkower, “Personalità e destino,” pp. 34-36. Thelen reproduced the first half of Bernardo’s text; the entire text can be found in vol. VII, pp. 114-20 of the 1974-75 reprint of Baldinucci, and in Connors pp. 157-60.

Filippo Baldinucci (d. 1696), *Notizie de’ professori del disegno*, Florence, VI, 1728; Florence, 1845 (reprint 1975-75), VII, pp. 114-20

Lione Pascoli, *Vite de’ pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni*, 2vols., Rome, 1730-36; eds. Valentino Martinelli and Alessandro Marabottini, Perugia, 1992, pp. 399-412.

Two authors have perceived the increasing degree of melodrama in the biographers: Jan Bialostocki, “Smierc Borrominiego: fakty i mity w historiografii artystycznej” (“The Death of Borromini”), in *Refleksje i syntezy ze swiata sztuki. Cykl drugi*, Warsaw, 1987, pp. 151-60 (reference and summary kindness of Dr. Katarzyna Murawsky-Muthesius); Heinrich Thelen, “Francesco Borromini. Bemerkungen zur persönlichkeit,” in G. Staccioli and I. Osols-Wehden, eds., *Come l’uom s’eterna. Beiträge sur Literatur-, Sprach- und Kunstgeschichte Italiens und der Romania. Festschrift für Erich Loos*, Berlin, 1994, pp. 264-94.

2. Hempel 1924, p. 3; Marcello del Piazzo, ed., *Ragguagli borrominiani*, Rome, 1968, p. 20.

3. Giulio Rossi and Eligio Pometta, *Storia del Cantone Ticino*, Locarno, 1980, pp. 89-131; Ivano Prosperi, *Bissone*, Bern, 1999. My thanks to Nicola Soldini, Aurora Scotti and their colleagues for much information about the Swiss and Milanese periods of Borromini’s life.

Both Borromini's mother and father came from old and much-ramified clans of masons. His father had a double cognomen that he passed on to all his descendants, Giovanni Domenico Castelli Brumino; Castelli was the name of his biological father but Brumino the name of the stepfather who raised him. For his first twenty-five years our architect would be called Francesco Castelli, then in c. 1628-34 "Francesco Borromino alias Castello" or "Francesco Castelli detto Borromino," finally for the rest of his life Francesco Borromino or Borromini. His nephew and heir, Bernardo Castelli Borromini (1643-1709) would carry the double name into the eighteenth century.⁴

Borromini's mother Anastasia came from a distinguished family of masons and builders, the Garovo.⁵ She married at 33 and had her first child, Francesco, at age 43, but still had time to bear two more children before Borromini's father died in 1623. She lived on but "taken in mind" ("mente tamen capta ab annis tredecim") until she died in 1636 at about 80.⁶

Emigration was the fate of most of the talented masons, stuccatori, sculptors and artists born on the Lombard lakes.⁷ Bissone sent Garovo masons, relatives of Borromini's mother, to build churches and castles in Moravia.⁸ It produced the Gaggini, who dominated sculpture in Palermo for generations, and the Tencala, who were court artists and architects in Vienna. The Santini family from the Lake of Lugano settled in Prague and the Longhena from Maroggia in Venica; the Fossati from Morcote would win their fame in Istanbul. Many clans sent the flower of their youth to Rome, such as the Fontana from Melide, the Longhi from Viggìù, and the Mola from Coldrerio. Closer to home the great magnet for masons and stonecutters from the lakes was Milan, where the Duomo had been begun by masters from Campione.⁹ There was always work to be had in the stone-yards of this never-finished building, and the sons of master masons could

4. Hempel 1924, pp. 3-7; Heinrich Thelen, *Francesco Borromini. Die Handzeichnungen*, Part I: 1620-32, 2 vols., Graz, 1967, pp. 95-97, especially p. 97, n. 3 for the solution of the double name problem; *Ragguagli*, pp. 19-21 and 159-61; Paolo Tournon, "Per la biografia di Francesco e Bernardo Borromini," *Commentari*, 18, 1967, pp. 86-89; Hibbard, *Maderno*, pp. 93-101.

5. Also called Garvi, Garvo, Garogo or Garuo, and allied to the Garvo Allio or Garovaglio; see Muñoz 1919, pp. 104ff.; Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, p. 96, n. 4; Hibbard, *Maderno*, p. 101.

6. *Ragguagli*, p. 21.

7. A. Bertolotti, *Artisti lombardi a Roma nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII*, Rome, 1881; Ugo Donati, *Artisti ticinesi a Roma*, Bellinzona, 1942.

8. Jarmila Krcálová, "O Rodine Franceska Borrominiho" ["Concerning the Family of Francesco Borromini"], *Umeni*, XXXIII, 1985, pp. 414-25, with German summary (reference kindness of Michael Young).

9. Evelyn Welch, *Art and Authority in Renaissance Milan*, New Haven and London, 1995, p. 82.

get an education in the grammar school attached to the campo santo of the duomo.¹⁰ This is where Borromini's father sent his ten-year-old son. Borromini would remain in Milan for a decade, from 1609 to 1619.

Recent research has established that Borromini was apprenticed to the sculptor Andrea Biffi (c.1581-c.1630), the artist responsible for many of the reliefs on the choir screen of the Duomo, for the monument to S. Carlo Borromeo in the cathedral apse, and for the colossal marble statue of Philip II of Spain in the Piazza dei Mercanti. Both of the latter were completed in 1611, shortly after Borromini's arrival.¹¹ Biffi trained Borromini in the art of decorative sculpture, which is how he made his living when he first went to Rome, and after he had achieved fame biographers were struck by how he had risen from *intagliatore* to architect: "ist erstlich nur ein intagliator gewesen" in the words of the Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin.¹² In 1613 a famous refugee mathematician from Urbino, Muzio Oddi, opened a *scuola di architettura specolativa* in Milan for youths from the nobility, but we do not know for sure whether he taught the young Borromini, who would go on to become the most mathematical of architects.¹³

Milan was important for Borromini in a way that Naples, which he left at seven, was not for Bernini. During these adolescent years Borromini learned much from the work of Bramante, especially the perspectival illusionism of the apse of S. Maria presso S. Satiro. He may have heard echoes of the famous advice given by Leonardo for the tiburio of the cathedral in 1491. In any case he would consistently use the Lombard tiburio in his own churches in preference to the taller Roman dome. Borromini's father was an architect in the service of the Visconti Borromeo and so the boy would have been shown the magnificent nymphaeum, art collection and collection of natural wonders assembled by Pirro Visconti Borromeo (1560-1604) in his villa at Lainate.¹⁴ Later in Rome he would assemble a small cabinet of curiosities of his own, possibly a

10. Sabine Kappner, "Francesco Borrominis Ausbildungsjahre an der Mailänder Dombauhütte 1608 bis 1619," *Arte Lombarda*, 108/109, 1994, 1-2, pp. 14-20.

11. Maria Teresa Fiorio, "Gian Andrea Biffi," *The Dictionary of Art*, London, 1996, 4, p. 45; Barbara Agosti, "Colossi di Lombardia," *Prospettiva*, 83-84, 1996, pp. 177-82; my thanks to Nicola Soldini and Aurora Scotti for a discussion of the results of new research forthcoming in Manuela Kahn-Rossi and Marco Francioli, eds., *Il giovane Borromini. Dagli esordi a San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane* (cat.), Lugano and Milan, 1999.

12. Björn Kommer, *Nicodemus Tessin der Jüngere und das Stockholmer Schloss*, Heidelberg, 1974, p. 158.

13. Sabine Kappner, *Borromini zwischen Gotik und Barock*, phil. Diss., Berlin, 1993, summarized in the article by *eadem*, "Francesco Borrominis Ausbildungsjahre an der Mailänder Dombauhütte 1608 bis 1619," *Arte Lombarda*, 108/109, 1994, 1-2, pp. 14-20; and Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, "Nuovi argomenti per Francesco Borromini," *Arte Lombarda*, 121, 1997/3, pp. 5-42.

14. Giulio Bora, "Milano nell'età di Lomazzo e San Carlo: riaffermazione e difficoltà di sopravvivenza di una cultura," *Rabisch. Il grottesco nell'arte del Cinquecento. L'Accademia*

reflection of the larger and more glamorous collection he had seen at Lainate.

The Milanese church that influenced Borromini most was S. Lorenzo Maggiore.¹⁵ This great late antique rotunda, the Pantheon of north Italy, had suddenly collapsed in 1573. The reconstruction was put in the hands of Martino Bassi. However, in 1589, when the rebuilding had reached the level of the main cornice, Bassi's project was attacked by a cabal made up of Monsignore Guido Mazenta, *prefetto della fabbrica*, and the architect Tolomeo Rinaldi. These critics wanted to redesign S. Lorenzo along the lines of St. Peter's in Rome. They urged the use of great monolithic columns: "nelle smisurate colonne hanno messo ogni loro grandezza, et maestà gl'antichi." They criticized Bassi for turning a Roman building into a gothic one and for building in too unconventional and delicate a manner:

nè si è trovato mai, che uno stecco sostegna un monte, una mensoletta una gran molle ad uso de' Tedeschi, i quali secando, e confundendo ogni cosa insieme hanno voluto non solo lasciar da parte la gravità dell'Architettura, la quale è conformarsi con la naturale, e vera; ma abbracciando ancora la poco verosimile si sono dati in preda alla licenza poetica, e pittoresca.¹⁶

Bassi defended himself by an appeal to Nature, "maestra di tutte le cose," which creates structures that are durable even though they seem to stand on nothing, like the branches on a tree or the nose on a face. He won his case and managed to keep the commission. S. Lorenzo was finished during the decade that Borromini spent in Milan, 1609-19, and the young apprentice would have heard of the great polemic in which Roman *gravitas* was pitted against an architecture looking to Nature. When Borromini built his first church he would try to reconcile the two extremes, the Lombard and the Roman. It has always been recognized that S. Carlino

della Val di Blenio. Lomazzo e l'ambiente milanese (cat.), Lugano and Milan, 1998, pp. 37-56; Kahn-Rossi and Francioli, eds., *Il giovane Borromini*, 1999.

15. Luisa Giordano, "San Lorenzo nella cultura del primo Rinascimento," in Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua, *La basilica di San Lorenzo in Milano*, Milan, 1985, pp. 117-43; Cristina Parodi, "Martino Bassi e la ricostruzione della cupola di S. Lorenzo tra Cinque e Seicento," *Arte Lombarda*, 92/93, 1990, 1-2, pp. 31-45; Giuseppe Rocchi Coopmans De Yoldi, "Martino Bassi e la ricostruzione di San Lorenzo a Milano," in *Milano ritrovata* (exhib. cat.), ed. Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, Milan, 1991, pp. 87-107; Cristina Loi, "Disegni per Milano al Victoria & Albert Museum di Londra," *Il Disegno di Architettura*, 13, April 1996, pp. 31-38. My thanks to Cristina Loi for discussing this literature with me. The key documents were published in the second edition of the famous polemic by Martino Bassi, *Dispareri in materia d'architettura, et prospettiva. Con pareri di eccellenti, et famosi architetti, che li risolvono*, Bressa, 1572, which has a slightly different title: *Dispareri in materia d'architettura, e prospettiva coll'aggiunta degli scritti del medesimo intorno all'insigne Tempio di S. Lorenzo Maggiore di Milano*, ed. Francesco Bernardino Ferrari, Milan, 1771.

16. Martino Bassi, *Dispareri*, ed. Ferrari, Milan, 1771, p. 91f.

shows the influence of S. Lorenzo. It can be put more finely: S. Carlino shows the influence of S. Lorenzo as rebuilt by Bassi and then critiqued by the advocates of a more Roman style.

Borromini must have heard a great deal from his father about Pellegrini Tibaldi (1527-96), the right-hand man of Archbishop Carlo Borromeo for two decades, 1564-86.¹⁷ In Pellegrini's architecture he would see, at one remove, what had been going on in mid-century Rome, and what Vasari had meant by Michelangelo's licence. The rising star of his own day was Francesco Maria Ricchini (1584-1658).¹⁸ Ricchini introduced Maderno's style of robust ornament and artful camouflage to Milan, and in his impeccable drawings explored innovative and fluid spatial arrangements which seem to foreshadow Borromini. No modern building was more influential for Borromini than Ricchini's little church of S. Giuseppe, built in 1607-16. Here Ricchini experiments with giant columns and pierced crossing piers and a facade that out-Madernos Maderno for sheer exuberance and the boldness of its mismatch with the interior. Borromini's early ideas for the facade of S. Carlino would come directly from S. Giuseppe.

Borromini left Milan in 1619. His nephew Bernardo, in a brief *vita* written in 1685, relates from hearsay the story that he slyly raised cash from a man in debt to his father and left with friends in secret. We do not know what he saw on the way. On 26 October and 22 November 1619 we find payment to a Francesco Castelli at St. Peter's: Borromini had arrived in Rome.¹⁹ He was not there as a student but an immigrant. We know of no further travel. His father died in 1623 and his mother in 1636, but there is no concrete evidence for a return to Bissone in those years, and Pascoli's story, that he returned to Lombardy just as his last bout of melancholy was setting in, cannot be confirmed either.²⁰ He jotted the title of Bocchi's guide to Florence on a drawing of 1652 and mentioned the Cappella del Tesoro in Naples in a note of 1651, but we do not know if he travelled to either of these cities. Beyond the occasional visit to Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli and the Pamphilj fief of S. Martino nel Cimino Rome seems to have sufficed for the Lombard

17. Derek Moore, "Pellegrino Tibaldi's Church of S. Fedele in Milan: The Jesuits, Carlo Borromeo and Religious Architecture in the late Sixteenth Century," Ph.D. diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1988; Stefano Della Torre and Richard Schofield, *Pellegrino Tibaldi architetto e il S. Fedele di Milano. Invenzione e costruzione di una chiesa esemplare*, Milan, 1994.

18. Stefan Kummer, *Mailänder Kirchenbauten des Francesco Maria Ricchini*, diss. Würzburg, 1974, a small part of which has been published by him as "Mailänder Vorstufen von Borrominis S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rom," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 28, 1977, pp. 153-90; Rudolf Wittkower, *Gothic vs. Classic. Architectural Projects in Seventeenth-Century Italy*, New York, 1974, pp. 37-45 and figs. 44-52; Simonetta Coppa, *La chiesa di San Giuseppe nella storia artistica milanese dal Cinquecento all'Ottocento*, Milan, 1997 (kind reference of Aurora Scotti).

19. *Ragguagli*, pp. 67 and 197f.; Hibbard, *Maderno*, p. 54.

20. Pascoli 1992, p. 401.

newcomer.

The émigré world of Lombard masons and artists would form the nurturing backdrop to Borromini's early years in Rome. He lived in the house of a relative of his mother, Leone Garovo, on the Vicolo dell'Agnello (Nolli 542) between S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini and the Ponte S. Angelo, in an area cleared under Mussolini.²¹ He quickly came to the notice of Garovo's father-in-law, Carlo Maderno, the most famous architect in Rome. Maderno had himself started out as a stuccatore from the town of Capolago on the Lake of Lugano. When Garove died from a fall from the scaffolding of St. Peter's in 1620 Borromini bought up his tools and marbles and acquired some of his drawings. In 1621 he entered into partnership with other Lombard marmorarii to start a "società di arte del marmo, per servizio di qualunque persona..." He did some of the angels that decorate the doors of St. Peter's, "spiritosi e vivaci," and the lone but lively cherub that is now over Algardi's *Attila* relief in the southwest corner of the basilica. He worked on the Porta Santa for the Holy Year of 1625 and a small fountain with Barberini bees for the Vatican Belvedere in the same year.²² In 1626 he built the oval base on which Michelangelo's statue of the *Pietà* now rests. In 1628 he worked with Agostino Radi, Bernini's brother-in-law, on the niches in the apse of St. Peter's where the tombs of Urban VIII and Paul III were to be placed. From 1628 to 1632 we find the same partners working on the steps and column bases of the high altar of St. Peter's and the shrines in the crossing piers.

Maderno noticed his young relative's diligence and skill and in particular his talent for drawing, and although he encouraged him to continue working in sculpture he began to use him as a draftsman for all his projects: the facade of S. Andrea della Valle in 1621-23, the "restoration" of the Pantheon in 1625-26, many doorframes and iron grilles in St. Peter's in 1627-28, Palazzo Peretti in 1623, finally Palazzo Barberini in 1628. As Maderno's hands became progressively crippled with gout he could count on Borromini for superb drawings worked up from his own sketches. He replaced Maderno's trusted draftsman, Filippo Breccioli, who was demoted to the task of *misura*.²³

When Maderno died in 1629 Borromini's drawing style takes a new turn. Now he would almost always leave out the colorful wash finish so beloved by Maderno and would refine the pencil underdrawing so that it could stand on its own as a respectable presentation drawing. These are key years for Borromini's "graphite revolution." Especially in the drawings for Palazzo Barberini, Borromini would transform the lowly pencil of his Lombard training into a tool of great power and elegance. Indeed, graphite would not again sit on so high a seat in the hall of

21. Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, p. 96, nn. 7-8.

22. Cesare D'Onofrio, *Le fontane di Roma*, Rome, 1957, pp. 188f., figs. 153-54; Howard Hibbard and Irma Jaffe, "Bernini's Barcaccia," *Burlington Magazine*, 106, 1964, pp. 169f., n. 64.

23. Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, p. 97, n. 10.

draftsmanship until the time of Ingres.²⁴

To the Romans Borromini would always remain a northerner. He was always called something like “Francesco Borromini dello Stato di Milano,” “mediolanense,” or “lombardo.” In 1660-63 he even wrote a note about himself in the margin of a guidebook, “ma era di Milano.”²⁵ But he was also strongly marked by his decade with Maderno, to whom he remained loyal for the rest of his life. For example in 1650, after thirty years of withering criticism of the facade of St. Peter’s from Bernini and the circle of Maffeo Barberini, Borromini could still speak of it as “quella mai come merita lodata fabrica della facciata di S. Pietro.”²⁶ In his will he enjoined his nephew and heir to marry a niece of Maderno’s and he asked Maderno’s daughter for permission to be buried in the old master’s tomb.²⁷

From 1623 to 1629 Maderno and the professional architects of Rome had to witness the meteoric ascent of Gianlorenzo Bernini, a brilliant sculpture without architectural training, into the first ranks of architects.²⁸ Maffeo Barberini had known the young prodigy well during the Borghese and Ludovisi pontificates. When he was elected pope in 1623 he put Bernini into the center of his artistic policy. He thought of Bernini as a new Michelangelo, and to live up to the role Bernini had to learn to paint and had to take up the practice of architecture. The small commission of S. Bibiana in 1624 was his first essay in the new art. Bigger things were in store, however. In 1623 Urban VIII entrusted Bernini, at age 25, with the most important commission available, the high altar of St. Peter’s, which had to be ready or at least usable by 1626, the 1300th anniversary of the consecration of the Constantinian basilica. Bernini supervised the arduous work of modeling and became an expert in the art of bronze-founding. But Borromini worked for Bernini with the same diligence that he worked for Maderno. He did all the drawings, supervised the foundations, and in general thought through the architectural dimensions of this giant piece of liturgical furniture. His drawings show how carefully he studied the height of the

24. Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*; Joseph Connors, “Francesco Borromini (1599-1667): Die Revolution des Graphits,” in Elisabeth Kieven, *Von Bernini bis Piranesi. Römische Architekturzeichnungen des Barock* (cat.), Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung Staatsgalerie, 1993, pp. 33-38.

25. Cesare D’Onofrio as *Roma nel Seicento*, Florence, 1969, p. 15.

26. Fra Juan di San Bonaventura, *Relatione del Convento di S. Carlo alle 4o fontane di Roma*, Archivio di S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, vol. 77a, fol. 26.

27. Ugo Donati 1942; Portoghesi, *Borromini nella cultura europea*, pp. 381-84; Thelen, *Corpus*, pp. 97f., dok. 3 (extracts); Raggiagli, p. 31.

28. The best summary of these years is Howard Hibbard, *Carlo Maderno and Roman Architecture 1580-1630*, London, 1971, pp. 89-92.

superstructure in relation to the vast space of Bramante's crossing.²⁹

On 30 January 1629 Maderno died and Borromini lost an employer and a father figure. Five days later Urban VIII appointed Bernini as *architetto della fabbrica di S. Pietro*. He was now also the architect officially in charge of Palazzo Barberini. Borromini had expected to succeed Maderno at St. Peter's and was deeply hurt. He may not have realized how unlikely his appointment was. While still a cardinal Maffeo Barberini had advocated fidelity to Michelangelo's project for a centralized St. Peter's and had often crossed swords with Maderno, architect of the huge nave and of the facade that concealed Michelangelo's drum. As pope he had no intention of promoting what he must have thought of as the "setta madernesca" when his protégé, the new Michelangelo, was available and willing.

Bernini accepted the position but appealed to Borromini not to leave him at this crucial juncture, promising him ample recognition and reward. In Passeri's judicious phrase, "[Bernini] lo procurò suo aderente."³⁰ For three years Borromini continued to work for Bernini as he had for Maderno. There were fruitful exchanges, and on some of the drawings for St. Peter's and Palazzo Barberini one can see both artists thinking together on the same sheet, Borromini doing the architectural framework and Bernini the sculptural decoration.³¹ At Palazzo Barberini Borromini seems to have imbibed some of Bernini's sense of exuberance and fantasy, while Bernini learned a great deal about architecture, and learned how to manage the pencil.³²

But a rupture was bound to come, and to be all the more dramatic for the delay. In the words of Virgilio Spada, writing in 1657:

E con tutto che si disgustassero grandemente insieme, cioè il Bernino e Borromino, e che l'amore si convertisse in grandissimo odio [*cancelled*: mortale], per altre caggioni però che d'architettura³³

Borromini's nephew, writing in 1685, attributes the break to Borromini's general disillusionment. Bernini received a salary ten times that of Borromini, but according to Bernardo what galled Borromini most was not the money but that Bernini got the honor of his work. Passeri, writing in c. 1670-75, gives a specific cause. Borromini had entered into a partnership for marblework with the scarpellino Agostino Radi, Bernini's brother-in-law. Bernini sent a lot

29. Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of St. Peter's*, New York, 1968; Heinrich Thelen, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Hochaltar-Architektur von St. Peter in Rom*, Berlin, 1967; Tod Marder, *Bernini and the Art of Architecture*, New York, 1998, pp. 24-57.

30. Passeri-Hess, p. 360.

31. Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, C36.

32. Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, C48; Hibbard, *Maderno*, p. 91.

33. Joseph Connors, "Virgilio Spada's defence of Borromini," *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXI, 1989, p. 87.

of work in St. Peter's their way, but by a secret understanding with Radi he received a share of the profits. Borromini began to notice the hemorrhage of money but did not at first know the real cause. When he learned the truth, "he abandoned every [sculptural] impresa, the friendship of Bernini and the fabbrica of S. Pietro and gave himself over entirely to architecture." (Passeri-Hess, p. 361)

We know that the partnership with Radi lasted until the end of 1632, and Borromini's payments from St. Peter's cease in January 1633.³⁴ On 15 September 1632 Bernini had used his influence to secure the position as architetto della Sapienza for Borromini.³⁵ Whether this was a parting gift or an attempt to forestall Borromini's departure we do not know, and in any case. The Sapienza would not produce a real commission until 1642, when S. Ivo was at long last begun.

Borromini left Palazzo Barberini at about the same time. The palace had been valuable experience for him, and he had done drawings that incorporated the ideas of Maderno, Bernini, Cortona and indirectly the many amateurs who contributed to the design.³⁶ Many of the ideas were his own, however, and he was tired of working for other people. In fact in later years he used to say that Palazzo Barberini was all his design, a statement confirmed by Cardinal Francesco Barberini.³⁷ Entrée into the inner circles of the Barberini court was not as easy for the Lombard draftsman as it was for Tuscan artists of universal talent like Bernini and Cortona, but nevertheless it was in Palazzo Barberini that Borromini met future patrons and some intellectuals who helped shape his views on architecture. The list is impressive.

Cassiano Dal Pozzo was an intimate of Cardinal Francesco Barberini and someone who could introduce Borromini to the world of Roman archeology, both through his famous *museo cartaceo* and through manuscripts in his collection, like the Codex Coner and the drawings by G.B. Montano.³⁸ In Cassiano's museum of natural curiosities Borromini would be introduced to the

34. Antonio Muñoz, "La formazione artistica del Borromini," *Rassegna d'Arte*, VI, 1919, pp. 103-17; Oskar Pollak, *Die Kunsttätigkeit unter Urban VIII.*, I, Vienna, 1928, p. 160; *Ragguagli*, pp. 74f. and 131, with 22 January 1633 for the last payment to Borromini at St. Peter's.

35. Pollak, *Kunsttätigkeit*, I, p. 160; *Ragguagli*, p. 131.

36. Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, C40-67; Patricia Waddy, *Seventeenth-Century Roman Palaces: Use and the Art of the Plan*, New York, 1990.

37. Connors, "Spada's Defence," 1989, p. 87.

38. For Codex Coner, see Thelen, *Die Handzeichnungen*, C1-5, and Arnold Nesselrath, "Codex Coner - 85 Years On," in *Cassiano Dal Pozzo's Paper Museum* vol. II (Quaderni Puteani 3), ed. Jennifer Montagu, London, 1992, pp. 145-167. For Cassiano see Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, London, 1963, pp. 98-114; Francesco Solinas and Anna Nicolò, "Cassiano dal Pozzo and Pietro Testa: New Documents Concerning the *Museo cartaceo*," in E. Cropper, ed., *Pietro Testa 1612-1650: Prints and Drawings* (ex. cat.), Philadelphia, 1988, pp. lxvi-lxxxvi; Francesco Solinas, ed., *Cassiano Dal Pozzo: Atti del Seminario Internazionale di Studi*, Rome, 1989;

Lyncaean culture of experiment and study of the natural world. He also met padre Benedetto Castelli, tutor of mathematics to Taddeo Barberini. This learned Benedictine, Galileo's greatest student and an expert in hydraulics, would later procure drawings of S. Vitale in Ravenna for Borromini.³⁹ The Jesuit Hebrew scholar G.B. Ferrari would have taught Borromini the lore of allegorical botany and introduced him to the wealth of imported flora in the Barberini garden. Borromini also met Ascanio Filomarino (c. 1583-1666), the Neapolitan nobleman and Barberini courtier who was appointed archbishop of Naples in 1641. Before his departure for Naples he commissioned a great marble altar from Borromini for the Filomarino chapel in SS. Apostoli in Naples, which is built around concetti derived from Ferrari's allegorical botany.⁴⁰

Finally he met the two Carpegna brothers from the Marche. Young Count Ambrogio was a faithful Barberini courtier and diplomat who commissioned the family palace from Borromini in 1638-41. It would have been Borromini's largest palace, enjoying magnificent frontage on the newly created Piazza Trevi, had the patron not died unexpectedly in 1643. Cardinal Ulderico Carpegna (1595-1679), Ambrogio's older brother, built a much smaller palace on the northern tip of the same site in 1646-49; the main distinguishing feature is an ingenious spiral ramp and elaborate stuccoes at its entrance.

Cardinal Ulderico was important a lifelong protector of the architect and his family. In 1644-45 he set Borromini to work on the altar of his titular church, S. Anastasia. He consecrated S. Carlino in 1646. In 1662 he conveyed a request for plans of S. Carlino to Borromini from the bishop of Gubbio, Monsignor Alessandro Sperelli, who wanted to build a version of the Roman church on the site of a miracle-working icon. Thus was born the copy of S. Carlino in Gubbio, S. Maria del Prato, built in 1662-74. Borromini left Ambrogio money, statues and his golden chains of knighthood in his will, and in return the cardinal presided at the wedding in 1667 of Borromini's nephew Bernardo, the first of many architects' weddings that have been celebrated in S. Carlino. And in 1669, loyal to Borromini's family after his death, he served as godfather to a child from the marriage.

Cassiano Dal Pozzo's Paper Museum, London, 1992, 2 vols., (*Quaderni Puteani* 2 & 3); Ingo Herklotz, *Cassiano Dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1999. On Montano see now Lynda Fairbairn, *Italian Renaissance Drawings from the Collection of Sir John Soane's Museum*, 2 vols., London, 1998, II, "Giovanni Battista Montano 1534-1621 Three volumes," pp. 540-773.

39. S. Drake, "Benedetto Castelli," *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, New York, 1971, III, pp. 115-117; Joseph Connors, "Borromini, Hagia Sophia and S. Vitale," *Architectural Studies in memory of Richard Krautheimer*, ed. Cecil Striker, Mainz am Rhein, 1996, pp. 43-48.

40. Sebastian Schütze, "Die Cappella Filomarino in SS. Apostoli: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung und Deutung von Borrominis Projekt in Neapel," *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, XXV, 1989, 295-327.

Thus it can be said that the influence of the Barberini court lived on in Borromini's work long after the death of Urban VIII in 1644. But this is to run ahead of our story. It is time to return to the early 1630s and to the beginnings of Borromini's independent career.

S. Carlino

The path to a commission for an architect without patronage was either to discover relics (Bernini's strategy at S. Bibiana and Cortona's at SS. Martina e Luca), or to offer one's services for free to small religious communities anxious to build but strapped for cash. After an abortive offer to the Congregazione Lauretana of the Nazione Picena to design their church of S. Maria d Loreto in 1634,⁴¹ Borromini found his first real patrons, the Trinitarii Scalzi del Riscatto di Spagna, a group that had established themselves in a cluster of small houses at the Quattro Fontane in 1610. He built their new house (the "quarto di dormitorio") in 1634-35, the tiny cloister in 1635-36, and finally the church of S. Carlo, or as they would say San Carlitos, in 1638-41. Throughout he worked with one of his most creative but least appreciated patrons, Fra Juan de la Anunciacion (1595-1644).

The preoccupation of the first generation of Trinitarii scalzi in late-sixteenth-century Spain had been to begin the reform of their old medieval order; that of the second generation was to establish themselves in Rome to gain recognition from the papal court and approval for the scalzi reform. The preoccupation of the third generation was to build. Fra Juan de la Anunciacion must have been a frustratingly complex patron. He wanted his order to be the poorest of the poor, and yet he thought lavishness a sign of religious fervor when devoted to God's church. The residence and cloister had to be cheap, but he would have had a church as rich as Solomon's temple, with a floor of emeralds and precious stones, if he could have. Such contradictory messages would have baffled most architects, but Borromini achieved a close rapport with Fra Juan, and Fra Juan self-identified with Borromini's building. Mignard's fresco of the *Annunciation* over the main portal was a kind of signature for this monk, and in his portrait he chose to be depicted with a plan of S. Carlino. When he thought he was about to be made a cardinal in 1644 his pulse ran quick; when the rumor proved false his mortification was extreme. But his "disegno" for his church was constant, and merged beautifully with the ambition of his young architect to show "tutto il suo sapere."

In 1637 Borromini met his second patron, this one of lifelong importance, Virgilio Spada (1596-1662), the young priest in charge of building operations for the Congregazione dell'Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri. Spada was a remarkable personality who would go on to become the leading administrator of architecture under Innocent X and Alexander VII. He was Borromini's defender in the bosom of a conservative congregation, and he was his mouthpiece, articulate and literate, for the wider world. In the course of the construction of the Oratorio and the Casa dei Filippini he wrote many reports defending Borromini's innovations. In 1647 he drew these together into a

41. Muñoz 1919, pp. 114-16; Hempel 1924, p. 48; *Ragguagli*, p. 81.

“Piena relatione della fabbrica,” that is, a full monograph on the building, explaining the function of every room and the reasons for every design decision. Although Spada held the pen in many places we can hear Borromini’s voice in this precious document, which lay unpublished until 1725, when it appeared as volume II of Borromini’s *Opere*, with the Latin title *Opus Architectonicum*. Spada was also a prolific author of manuscripts and discourses; two bulky volumes of the architecture drawings he amassed over the course of three pontificates were acquired by the Vatican Library at the beginning of this century.

Spada and Borromini planned to dedicate the “Piena relatione” to Manuel de Moura y Corte Real (? - 1651), the Marchese di Castel Rodrigo.⁴² This enigmatic Iberian nobleman first crossed Borromini’s path at S. Carlino, where he offered to pay part of the expenses of the quarto di dormitorio in 1635. “Afeccionatissimo a fabriche,” he reappeared in about 1640 with a fabulous offer to put up 25,000 scudi for a facade, more in fact than Borromini thought the small church could use. “Voglio che tutta la facciata sia di mormoli,” was the ambassador’s reply.⁴³

Castel Rodrigo was the ambassador of Philip IV of Spain to the papal court in 1632-40, but he was Portuguese, not Spanish, and his roots were in Lisbon, not Madrid. He was the faithful servant of his king in artistic as well as diplomatic matters. Together with the viceroy to Naples, the Count of Monterrey, he collected Roman landscapes for the Palace of the Buen Retiro in Madrid. He sponsored splendid fireworks in the Piazza di Spagna in February 1637 to celebrate the election of the future emperor Ferdinand III as Re dei Romani; they were immortalized in a series of etchings by the young Claude Lorrain. But when Portugal rebelled from the Spanish crown in 1640 Castel Rodrigo was transferred to Vienna and Brussels and finally died in Madrid in 1651, a loyalist to Spain separated forever from his homeland by the one successful revolution of the seventeenth century.

Borromini and Duquesnoy had collaborated in c. 1636-40 on a monumental altar for Castel Rodrigo’s family chapel in the Benedictine church of Lisbon, Sao Bento, the “sepolchri de suoi heroi,” as Borromini calls them in the “Piena relatione” on the Casa dei Filippini. We do not know how much of this was shipped by the time of the revolution of 1640, but at the end of his life Castel Rodrigo was lamenting the fact that many of his sons and daughters were buried on foreign soil and that the chapel in Lisbon remained unfinished. It was spared by the earthquake of 1755 but dismantled when Sao Bento was rebuilt as the meeting place of the National Assembly in 1895. The loss of Borromini’s altar, even in its unfinished state, was tragic. It was

42. Joachim Leitao, *O palácio de Sao Bento*, Lisbon, 1945, pp. 39-41; Alfonso Rodriguez G. de Ceballos, “Francisco Borromini y España,” in Giulio Carlo Argan, *Borromini* (1955), Madrid, 1980; Joseph Connors, “Borromini and the Marchese di Castel Rodrigo,” *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIII, 1991, pp. 434-40.

43. Fra Juan di San Bonaventura, *Relatione del Convento di S. Carlo alle 4o fontane di Roma*, fol. 34.

probably at least as impressive as his other great export piece, the Filomarino altar, shipped to Naples in 1639-42.

The outgoing years of the Barberini pontificate saw the disastrous War of Castro in 1641-43 and the ultimate disgrace of the Barberini nephews. Urban VIII died in 1644, burdened with guilt not only at his mistaken foreign policy but at the immensity of his nepotism. But in the final, war-torn years of the pontificate Borromini designed and began his masterpiece, the university chapel of S. Ivo alla Sapienza.

S. Ivo was begun in June 1643 and took fourteen months to build. The vault contract was signed a few days before the election of Innocent X on 15 September 1644. The new pope appreciated Borromini but shunned this Barberini commission for most of his pontificate, and so until 1651 the church stood *in rustica*, a bare unfinished shell, like one of the tempietti in Hadrian's Villa. Borromini finally tempted Innocent X to take a limited role by commissioning the spiral and lantern, the "tempietto sopra il tempio," as he put it. This cost only 1600 scudi. The next pope, Alexander VII, spent the huge sum of 25,000 scudi on the Sapienza, mostly on Borromini's splendid Biblioteca Alessandrina, but also on the marble floor, the altarpiece, and the stucco decorations of the interior and exterior.

Innocent X (1644-55) was passionate about architecture and understood it well. In his rejection of everything the Barberini stood for he distanced Bernini and used him very little in the first years of his pontificate. He favored his aging house architect, Girolamo Rainaldi, and Borromini. Rainaldi got the commission to rebuild Palazzo Pamphilj in Piazza Navona in 1644-46, with Borromini kept in the wings as a consultant and finally given his lead with the Pamphilj Gallery in 1646. Borromini had the idea of installing a fountain with the obelisk from the Circus of Maxentius at the center of the piazza, and he brought water from the main line of the Trevi aqueduct in 1645-47.⁴⁴ But Bernini snatched the commission from him and built the *Quattro Fiumi* fountain in 1648-51, the first reverse in Borromini's otherwise unstoppable rise.

During the pontificate of Innocent X nothing split the Roman architectural world more than the affair of the campanile of St. Peter's.⁴⁵ It drove a permanent wedge between Bernini and Borromini. Bernini planned tall, three-story campanili in 1636. Borromini, who knew Maderno's facade and the capacity of its foundations from first-hand experience, warned that they would be too heavy. The campanili were begun anyway in 1636-41, two stories in stone and a wood model to represent the third story, amounting to 290-300 palmi in all, taller than the facade on which they stood. In September 1641 allarming cracks appeared and the pope was upset. Yet he continued building both towers.

44. Bertolotti, *Artisti lombardi*, II, p. 31.

45. Sarah McPhee, "Bernini's Bell Towers for St. Peter's and the Politics of Architecture at the Vatican," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1996, with previous bibliography.

When Innocent X came to the throne in 1644 he immediately called for an investigation, in which Virgilio Spada was to play a key role. The commission began its work in June 1645. Spada submitted an amazing report that combines archival research, information from a *tasto* or trench to study the foundations, interviews with survivors of the original building crew and his own poetical soil mechanics. His general conclusion was that the facade would settle of its own account and for the moment nothing needed to be done. But Bernini always believed that Spada had stabbed him in the back, and that of all his critics Borromini was the worst: “egli solo alla presenza del papa inveì contro di lui di tutto cuore, e di tutta lena.”

In February 1646 the congregation decreed that the campanili should be dismantled down to the level of Maderno’s attic, and then rebuilt. It seemed at the time that Bernini had triumphed, since he had proposed a convincing design for the rebuilding, developed together with Carlo Rainaldi. But though the campanili were dismantled between February 1647 and January 1648, amidst much palace intrigue, they were never rebuilt. Bernini never forgave Borromini for his opposition, and from this time forward they remained lifelong enemies.

Borromini’s most challenging commission was the reconstruction of the nave of the Lateran basilica, the cathedral of Rome, in 1646-50.⁴⁶ Unlike Julius II Innocent X insisted that Borromini retain the old basilica plan and leave as much as possible of the old masonry in place: “senza alterare la pianta, senza muovere mura, e senza scomponimento del tutto.” Huge work gangs were needed to get the project moving in time for the deadline, the Holy Year of 1650. With the structural problems of keeping old walls and a heavy coffered ceiling in place high over the workmen’s heads there was ample room for failure, and the whole Roman architectural world, particularly Borromini’s ever-present “emoli,” were waiting to see if he would trip. He did not, yet the pope would not let him proceed with the removal of the wooden ceiling and its replacement by a vault. Borromini was schooled on the model of what Michelangelo had done in St. Peter’s but Innocent X on the teachings of Baronius and the Oratorians, who promoted the cult of early Christian antiquity, and his slogan of conservation with embellishment (“et vetustas servareter, et venustas addereer”) was incompatible with Borromini’s desire to have a free hand. Though frustrated himself, in the end he pleased the pope with what one might call a reliquary strategy: stretches of old wall were left visible in oval frames (later filled with paintings) at clerestory level, and the green marble columns of the side aisles were reused in the niches that line the nave.

46. Augusto Roca De Amicis, *L’opera di Borromini in San Giovanni in Laterano: gli anni della fabbrica (1646-1650)*, Rome, 1995, with previous bibliography; *idem*, “Considerazioni sulla basilica Lateranense prima del rifacimento borrominiano,” *Quaderni*, N.S. fasc. 15-20, 1990-92 (*Saggi in onore di Renato Bonelli*), I, pp. 345-354, *idem*, “Borromini in Laterano sotto Alessandro VII. Il completamento della basilica,” *Palladio*, 18, July-December 1996, pp. 51-74.

There were moments of high tension during construction. When Borromini lost the commission of the Piazza Navona fountain to Bernini in 1648 he walked off the job at the Lateran, at a point when the structural work was finished but the decorative stuccoes hardly begun. Time was running short. But Borromini's retaliation was measured and he allowed work to continue under the direction of his friend Pietro da Cortona. Things would have gone fine if Spada had not made a strategic mistake: he hired a second team of stuccatori under a capomastro stuccatore whom Borromini did not like. Borromini called a general walkout and the two rival capomaestri stuccatori stalked the worksite wearing swords, but in the end Borromini had his way and work resumed at its normal hectic pace. The basilica was ready to receive the masses of pilgrims who came for the Holy Year. But a few days before it opened tragedy intervened.

On 6 December 1649 the cadaver of one Marco Antonio Bussone, "romano et forse chierico" was found battered and bound in a room where he had been stuffed by Borromini's workmen. He had been discovered the night before damaging some of the fine marbles destined for the church and had been detained and beaten on Borromini's orders; to make matters worse they tried to bury the body in the porch of the church. Borromini had been rash and the workmen were overzealous, and now the case was before the courts. Everything possible was done to hush up the incident. Given his good record, Borromini was remanded to temporary banishment at the pope's pleasure and seems not to have spent any time in prison. He scribbled the title of a guidebook to Florence on a drawing for the lantern of S. Ivo in late 1651 or early 1652, but in the end we do not know if he was required to absent himself from Rome briefly in the wake of the incident. The threat of a three-year banishment to Orvieto hung over his head but in the end was not imposed on him.⁴⁷

The Lateran brought glory as well as sorrow. On 16 (or 26) July 1652 Innocent X conferred the *croce di Cristo* on Francesco Borromini "Mediolanensis," "accompagnando l'atto con parole di somma umanità."⁴⁸ Through Spada he channeled a gift of 3000 scudi for the work at the Lateran. Thus Borromini finally received, at age 53, for restoring the cathedral of Rome, the knighthood which Bernini had gotten for a portrait of Gregory XV at age 23 and Algardi for his bronze statue of Innocent X at age 51. Borromini seems already to have received a Spanish order of knighthood at the recommendation of Inigo Vélez de Guevara y Tassis, Conde de Oñate, who asked him for designs to restructure the Palazzo di Spagna, which he bought in 1647. The plans were highly regarded by Oñate even though he did not carry them out, probably because he was sent to Naples as viceroy after Masaniello's rebellion of 1647. He served from 1648 to 1653 in Naples and became a great builder. No documentation has ever been found for Borromini's

47. Bertolotti, *Artisti lombardi*, II, pp. 32-37; *Ragguagli*, pp. 27f. and 162.

48. *Ragguagli*, pp. 22 and 161; F. Buonanni, *Catologo degli ordini equestri, e militari*, Rome, 1724, no. 57; Sebastian Schütze, "Arte Liberalissima e Nobilissima. Die Künstlernobilitierung im päpstlichen Rom--Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte des Künstlers in der frühen Neuzeit," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, LXI, 1992, pp. 319-352.

Spanish knighthood, but according to Pascoli (p. 304) Borromini left two chains to Cardinal Carpegna in his will, presumably one for his papal cavalierato and the other for his Spanish.

The pontificate of Innocent X was Borromini's busiest and most prosperous period. Papal favor brought other commissions in its wake. Two sons-in-law of Donna Olimpia, the pope's influential sister, decided to build or expand their palaces at this time. One, Niccolò Ludovisi, chose Bernini to expand Palazzo Ludovisi (later Montecitorio) in 1653,⁴⁹ while the other, Andrea Giustiniani, chose Borromini to expand Palazzo Giustiniani in 1650. This was the palace where Vincenzo Giustiniani had formed his splendid collection of ancient sculpture in the first decades of the century, and where the young Borromini had gone to sketch antiquities, like so many other Roman artists. Now he returned as master builder. Work was limited to the main portal on the west facade and the northwest corner of the building. This angle had up until that time had contained the great pinacoteca of Vincenzo Giustiniani. Here 258 paintings had hung from floor to ceiling in two great rooms, including fifteen Caravaggio's. Borromini was in effect rebuilding the palace museum and rearranging the hang of the collection. His plans for a long north wing and a super-salone were thwarted by a lawsuit brought by Patrizi, Giustiniani's neighbor to the north, and the palace was not finished until 1671-76, and then by Domenico Legendre.

As early as 1634-35 Borromini was approached by Orazio Falconieri, a wealthy member of the Florentine community in Rome, for plans for reconstructing a Renaissance palace at the south end of Via Giulia, Palazzo Ceci-Odescalchi. In 1638 Borromini began the reconstruction with modest interventions, but then in 1646-51 Orazio had him carry out a major reconstruction. He retained the small Renaissance palace but rebuilt the courtyard and added an ecclesiastical block on Via Giulia for the patron's brother, Cardinal Lelio Falconieri, and a wing along the Tiber for the secular members of the family. The emblem-studded ceilings of the rooms on the piano nobile of these wings are among Borromini's most powerful works, shaping space above the head of the spectator but also communicating messages about the good reputation of the late cardinal, who had died in the months before they were begun.

In 1650-53 Borromini took over as architect of Palazzo Spada, but here most of what was done can be ascribed to the fantasy of the patron, Cardinal Bernardino Spada, Virgilio's brother. Bernardino was a passionate lover of perspective in any form and had an ample opportunity to see virtuoso displays of perspective during his diplomatic missions to Paris and Bologna and in the convent of the Trinità ai Monti, where he was cardinal protector for the French Minims, who numbered many experts in mathematics and perspective. The Minim François Nicéron planned an astronomical gallery in the palace and the Augustinian Fra Giovanni Maria da Bitonto did the calculations for the famous *prospettiva*. Borromini redesigned the staircase and the appartamento nobile and was also responsible for the piazza, which is a fantasy stage set that combines water

49. Allan Braham and Hellmut Hager, *Carlo Fontana: The Drawings at Windsor Castle*, London, 1977, pp. 112-17.

and a nymph fountain with the imagery of a rocca in the countryside, like one of the castles in the *sala dei feudi* brought out of doors.

In 1652 or 1653 Borromini received the commission to complete the tribune, cupola and campanile of the church of the Italian Minims, S. Andrea delle Fratte. The original patron of the church, Orazio Del Bufalo (d. 1612), had wanted to be buried under the cupola, like Cosimo de' Medici in S. Lorenzo in Florence or Cardinal Farnese in the Gesù, and his heir Paolo Del Bufalo had every intention of honoring his uncle's wish. Paolo was an enthusiast for Roman antiquity and occasionally went looking at excavations with Borromini. So it seemed entirely natural that Borromini should design a cupola based on the sepulchral monuments of the Roman countryside as sketched by Montano. For much of the time Paolo was in Florence and the design was carried on by correspondence, but he hung Borromini's drawing for the campanile in his palace, in the middle of his collection of mostly erotic art. When he died in 1665 his two daughters funneled the family fortune to their husbands, who had no interest in the finishing the commission, even though Borromini had left a model behind. Juvarra sketched the model twice during his Roman sojourn in 170-14 and imitated it in his designs for the cupola of S. Andrea in Mantua, thus giving one of Borromini's most daring designs an afterlife in the late baroque.

Right next to S. Andrea was the Propaganda Fide, Borromini's late institutional masterpiece. Had the roulette of the conclave gone another way in 1644 it might have been Bernini's. Bernini had built the small Re Magi Chapel for Cardinal Antonio Barberini the Elder in 1634. Working with Gaspare de' Vecchi, an architect who specialized in institutions, he had restructured the old Palazzo Ferratini facade facing the Piazza di Spagna in 1641-43. His contribution to the Propaganda had earned him the right to be buried from the chapel with the exequies due to a cardinal of the congregation, and in 1641 he bought a house and garden adjoining the southwest corner of the isola. The relationship between Bernini and the Propaganda Fide was special, but it did not survive the advent of Innocent X in 1644.

Cardinal Antonio Barberini the Elder died in 1646 and a month later the Congregation chose Borromini as their architect, on the strong recommendation of the pope. He worked in close collaboration with the powerful and visionary secretary of the Congregation, padre Francesco Ingoli, to devise a plan for the whole isola. This was the time when Bernini's little chapel was slated for demolition, although it did not in fact come down until c. 1660. Borromini also had plans for expropriating Bernini's garden and making it a piazzetta, but Bernini countered this move in 1656, after a more sympathetic pope had come onto the throne, by building a second house on the garden. This was the famous studio house where he would be visited by Cristina of Sweden. Inside it was filled with his collection and it enshrined the *Verità*, his monument to the restoration of his reputation after the affair of the campanili. Outside it was surrounded by Borromini buildings.

Fabio Chigi (1599-1667) had effectively run the government as secretary of state during the last dottering years of Innocent X. When he was elected as Alexander VII in 1655 Bernini saw a friend on the throne of the fisherman. He had an interview on the night of the election, and in the course of the eleven-year pontificate he would see the pope over 400 times, as opposed to 27 for Borromini. Alexander did not like Borromini, but he came to respect him. In Spada's words:

E Alessandro VII felicemente regnante quando ha veduto i suoi disegni hà formato concetto assai diverso da quello che altri havevono procurato d'instillargli⁵⁰

Alexander VII's policy was to leave Borromini with the commissions he already held, and in all of them there were important new campaigns that produced some of Borromini's late masterpieces: the Cappella dei Re Magi and the Propaganda Fide facade, the Biblioteca Alessandrina at the Sapienza, and the tomb monuments at the Lateran. There were small new commissions like the restoration of the roof of the Lateran baptistery but nothing major. Certainly Borromini never enjoyed the same rapport that Bernini enjoyed with the pope. Alexander VII was classical and Vitruvian in his upbringing, and Bernini insinuated the idea in his mind that Borromini was somehow a gothic architect who departed from the proportions of the human body in architecture and created chimaeras.

Of the private patrons who remained loyal to Borromini during the last decade of his life none was more important than Ottavio Falconieri. In 1634, the same year that he employed Borromini to design a modest expansion for what would become Palazzo Falconieri, Ottavio entrusted the commission of the family chapel in S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini to Pietro da Cortona. Cortona was a Tuscan artist already patronized by the Sacchetti, and so was the logical choice for the high altar of the Florentine church. Cortona built a "temporary" altar in wood on which mass was said for two decades. But in 1656 Ottavio took the commission away from Cortona and entrusted it to Borromini. Relationships between the two artists had been cordial; now they became bitter. And there was a certain irony in Ottavio's choice. Cortona, the Tuscan, spent his last years finishing the great church of the Milanese nation in Rome, S. Carlo al Corso, a commission that Borromini desperately wanted, while Cortona resented the loss of the high altar of the Florentine church to Borromini, "il milanese."

Borromini built the Falconieri altar slowly in the course of the decade following 1656. It is his most beautiful and most expensive design in "marmi mischi," precious materials that are more frequently associated with Bernini. At his death in 1667 neither the vault decoration nor the tombs were finished but Borromini had left stucco mock-ups for both in place. Then Cortona was called back to finish the chapel and all of Borromini's stucco decoration was swept away. Cortona redesigned the vault of the chapel and the finials of the two Falconieri tombs, and on the exterior, over the apse that rose up on the banks of the Tiber, he installed a window that is a near twin of his window over of the apse of S. Carlo al Corso. After Cortona's death in 1669 his

50. Connors, "Spada's Defence," p. 88.

disciple *Ciro Ferri* finished the chapel.

It was during the pontificate of *Alexander VII* that *Borromini* conceived of a project to publish his works. The “Piena relatione” on the *Casa dei Filippini* remained an unpublished manuscript, but now *Borromini* began to see the potential of guidebooks and etchings. At some point in the middle of the 1650s he formed a firm friendship with the polygraph and antiquarian *Fioravante Martinelli* (1599-1667), who would become his most outspoken champion. In *Martinelli*’s book of 1655 on early Christian churches in Rome, *Primo trofeo*, there is a long digression on *Borromini*’s restoration of the Lateran, and in the third edition in 1658 of his popular guidebook, *Roma ricercata*, *Borromini*’s buildings are mentioned in admiring terms fifteen times. The guide is illustrated with etchings by the French printmaker *Domenico Barrière*, a student of *Claude Lorraine* who branched out into architectural etching and developed a long-lasting relationship, possibly even friendship, with *Borromini*. Three of the etchings in *Roma ricercata* are devoted to the *Casa dei Filippini* by *Borromini*, “dal quale sono stato honorato del suo disegno.” In these tiny prints we have the seeds of the publication project, which blossomed around 1660.

Bernardo Borromini, who inherited the material for the publication project, mentions *Barrière* copperplates of the facade of the Oratory, the *Torre dell’Orologio* and the *Sapienza* as well as a “pianta giumentrale” of the *Sapienza*. Proofs of these plates found their way into the library of *Carlo Antonio Dal Pozzo* and are now in the British Library. In 1660-62 *Borromini* drew a number of geometrical plans for *S. Carlino*, and there is reason to believe that they too were meant for publication. However, *Bernardo* also mentions unbuilt projects, “tanto quelli messi in opera quanto quelli non messi in opera per diversi accidenti, et li altri soi pensieri.” This is puzzling, since all the surviving drawings relate to commissions and we have no purely imaginary fantasies from *Borromini*’s hand. Some of the buildings were not carried out with the full quota of ornament that *Borromini* wished and he undoubtedly wanted the publication project to show them in an ideal state, but we should probably not imagine wonderful castles in the air solely on the basis of *Bernardo*’s “altri soi pensieri.”

Martinelli came closer than anyone to understanding the deepest principles of *Borromini*’s art. In 1658-60 he composed a long monograph on the *Sapienza* which he wanted to illustrate with *Borromini* drawings, although in the end it remained unpublished. It would have been just the defense *Borromini* needed in the classicizing climate of the 1660s:

Cav. *Borromino*, al quali i virtuosi della sua professione devono restar molt’obligati per haver insegnato di fabricare edifitij reali senza demolire le sue parti nobili; e di nobilitare picciolissimi siti con fabriche sontuose, magnifiche, e copiose d’ordine e di ornamenti...⁵¹

Martinelli died on 24 July 1667, just one week before *Borromini*’s suicide. The emotional stress of the architect’s last days was probably exaggerated by the loss of this articulate and

51. *D’Onofrio*, *Roma nel Seicento*, pp. 216-20.

understanding friend.⁵²

Even if Borromini weathered the pontificate of Alexander VII better than he expected the first two years, 1656 and 1657, were dark for him.⁵³ He had a hair-trigger sense of honor and reacted badly to slights. To defend himself in a world of courtly intrigue he adopted a policy of retaliation through work stoppage. If he lost one commission he would walk off another hoping that the hurt would somehow ricochet back on the offending patron. 1657 was the great year of retaliations and thus a year of extreme self-punishment for Borromini. A crisis had been building up at S. Agnese ever since the death of Innocent X in 1655. In January 1657 Borromini absented himself from the worksite for a month, browsing in the bookstalls of Piazza Navona. In February he was dismissed in a report that listed his administrative and structural shortcomings and attacked his character as difficult and inflexible. In May the Oratorians definitively dismissed him, in spite of Spada's eloquent plea that if he were treated well he would not be so inflexible:

Egli è di natura di tale tempera che non resistera à i torti che si lo fanno, e però si è rotto con molti, mà dove gl'è portato quel rispetto ch' si deve al suo amore, et alla sua fedeltà, egli è un cagnolo.⁵⁴

Spada was on Borromini's side but the angry architect retaliated against him anyway. Borromini refused to install the ancient bronze doors at the Lateran, knowing that this would hurt Spada in the eyes of the pope, and thus indirectly embarrass the Oratorians, and further he stopped supervising work at the palace of Bernardino Spada, Virgilio's brother. Alexander VII was extremely annoyed and transferred the commission for the Lateran high altar to Pietro da Cortona. By November 1657 tempers had time to cool and the pope wanted Borromini back at the Lateran and began to conceive grand plans for the Sapienza. However, the strategy of measured retaliation took a heavy toll on Borromini in psychological terms. To compensate for the loss of one commission he would put another at risk. This most intensely active of men forced himself to go slow and in effect to suffer in order to inflict suffering in order to avoid shabby treatment. The self-destructive instinct, whipped up by the "stimolo d'honore," was always ready to return, and it did with a vengeance on the tragic night of 1-2 August 1667, when

52. D'Onofrio, *Roma nel Seicento*, p. xiii. The near coincidence of death dates was noticed by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, "'La religiosa trasmutazione' della piramide di Caio Cestio," *Arte Illustrata*, V, 1972, pp. 210-217; and H. Thelen, "Francesco Borromini. Bemerkungen zur Persönlichkeit," in G. Staccioli and I. Osols-Wehden, eds., *Come l'uom s'eterna. Beiträge zur Literatur-, Sprach- und Kunstgeschichte Italiens und der Romania. Festschrift für Erich Loos*, Berlin, 1994, p. 285.

53. Lina Montalto, "Il problema della cupola di Sant'Ignazio di padre Orazio Grassi e fratello Pozzo a oggi," *Bollettino del Centro di Studi per la Storia dell'Architettura*, XI, 1957, pp. 33-62; Wittkower, "Personalità e destino."

54. Connors, "Spada's Defence," p. 88.

the architect took his own life.⁵⁵

Borromini seems to have begun suffering from his malady, whether physical or psychological, on or around 22 July 1667.⁵⁶ He consigned a closed will to his notary on that day, but on 29 July he took it back, and no copy has ever been found. Fioravante Martinelli died on 27 July, and the conclusion seems inescapable that a bequest for this close friend featured largely in the first testament. A few days prior to 1 August he burned some but by no means all of the drawings he had prepared for the publication project. His physical condition, especially the distraught look on his face, caused his friends great distress and they decided it was best not to leave him alone. The scarpellino in charge of S. Carlino and S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Francesco Massari, was lodged in the neighboring room. Borromini was visited by his confessor, padre Orazio Callera, and he went to S. Giovanni [in Laterano?] once “a pigliare il giubileo.”

After dinner on 1 August he began to compose a new will, writing in pencil until midnight (“sino alle tre hore di notte”).⁵⁷ Massari called in to tell him to stop writing and get some sleep. Borromini put out the light, but two or three hours later awoke and asked for light. He got from Massari a curt “Signor no.” Restless and resentful he tried to think of some way of doing himself harm, and this agitation lasted until about 5:30 AM (“all’otto hore e mezzo in circa”). He remembered he had a sword hanging among the blessed candles at his bedstead (in fact he owned four swords), and--“disesperato”--he unsheathed it, planted the hilt on his bed and the point in his side, and threw himself down so that it past right through him. He fell to the floor and screamed; Massari rushed in, called for help and got him back on the bed. Dawn was beginning to break.

Borromini was mortally wounded but lived through 2 August. A surgeon from the Ospedale di S. Spirito came and took down his account of what had happened. His notary came and drew up a

55. On the personality the views of Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, Berlin, 1930 (Italian translation: *L’architettura di Borromini*, ed. Marco Pogacnik, Milan, 1996) were attacked in the classic study by Rudolf Wittkower, “Francesco Borromini: personalità e destino,” in *Studi sul Borromini. Atti del Convegno promosso dall’Accademia Nazionale di San Luca*, I, Rome, 1967, pp. 19-48; English version: “Francesco Borromini, His Character and Life,” in *Studies in the Italian Baroque*, London, 1975, pp. 153-176. Two authors have perceived the increasing degree of melodrama in the biographers, Bialostocki 1987, and Thelen, “Bemerkungen zur Persönlichkeit,” 1994.

56. Antonino Bertolotti, *Artisti lombardi a Roma nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII*, Rome, 1881, II, pp. 37-42; Ugo Donati, “Il testamento di Francesco Borromini,” *L’Urbe*, VII, 7, 1942, pp. 18-22; *Ragguagli*, pp. 29-32.

57. The hours were counted in Rome beginning at half an hour after sunset; see Michael Talbot, “*Ore Italiane: The Reckoning of the Time of Day in Pre-Napoleonic Italy*,” *Italian Studies*, XL, 1985, pp. 51-62.

new will in the presence of seven witnesses. A year before, on 6 April 1666, Borromini had asked for and received permission from the Trinitarians of S. Carlino to select a site in the crypt in order to “fabricar una capilla, y altar, y acomodar su sepulcro.”⁵⁸ But death came sooner than he had planned. In his dying hours he made arrangements to be buried, without pomp of any sort, in the tomb of Carlo Maderno in S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, in return for a generous recompense to the architect’s daughter Giovanna. He died at about 7 AM (“alle dieci ore”) on 3 August.

The will had direct implications for Bernardo. He was Borromini’s main heir, but to collect the inheritance he had to marry Maderno’s granddaughter Maddalena Puppi. He complied, and Cardinal Ambrogio Carpegna celebrated the marriage on 27 October 1667, a little less than three months after Borromini’s suicide.⁵⁹ The bride was 20 and the groom 24. For another decade Bernardo stayed in Borromini’s house next to S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. The total inheritance amounted to about 10,000 scudi, of which Bernardo was allowed to use 2000 scudi to set up house. On 20 February 1669 the first child of the young couple was baptized and named Francesco. Cardinal Carpegna was his godfather. Bernardo turned out to be the most mediocre of architects, and none of his three sons pursued architecture. What counts in this case is not the effect but the wish of the dying architect, namely that the clan from the Lake of Lugano should live on.

The same notary who wrote Borromini’s will took an inventory of the contents of the house on 3 August 1667, immediately after his death, and Bernardo commissioned a second inventory the following day.⁶⁰ These are revealing documents, a window on Borromini’s private world. Unlike Flaminio Ponzio, Cortona, Bernini or the Longhi, all of whom built splendid houses, Borromini never bothered to build a new house as a demonstration of his wealth and standing. But he accumulated possessions: tools of the trade, works of art, curiosities of man and nature.

Borromini owned hundreds of books, three or four times as many as the next most bookish architect of the age, his rival Paolo Maruscelli. He had 142 pictures, mostly landscapes and religious paintings, but also portraits of the people who meant a great deal to him, such as Innocent X with the Lateran in the background and Cardinal Spada in a shell-studded frame. He had a medallion showing Michelangelo’s tomb in S. Croce as well as stucco busts of Michelangelo and Seneca. Borromini was a well-armed architect, with four swords, a halberd (“labarda”) and an *archibugio*. We get a vivid glimpse of his studio and his special ways of

58. Archivio di S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, vol. 207; see Joseph Connors, “The Baroque Architect’s Tomb,” *An Architectural Progress in the Renaissance and Baroque. Sojourns In and Out of Italy* (Festschrift Hellmut Hager), *Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University*, VIII, 1992, p. 393.

59. *Ragguagli*, p. 35.

60. *Ragguagli*, pp. 32f., 163-76 and pls. X and XI; Portoghesi, *Borromini nella cultura europea*, pp. 384ff.

working from the many chests and boxes stuffed with drawings, the dozen compasses, and the many models in wood, clay and red wax. These plastic materials were ideally suited for curved facades like S. Agnese and S. Carlino. But he also had various mirrors, samples of fine marble, a double-headed herm, a hundred ancient medals and assorted metal *Kleinkunst* from the ancient world: a bust, ostriches, frogs, idoletti, capricci, horses heads, spearheads, heads of serpents, spoons, a pail, lamps. There were crystal vessels, an ancient eagle's head in gesso, an "unghia della gran bestia," twenty-five inscriptions and several shells, including one mounted on a pedestal in the shape of an eagle's claw.

The terms of reference for such a collection are the cabinets of curiosity of seventeenth-century Europe.⁶¹ On a grand scale these are represented by the museums of Pirro Visconti Borromeo and Manfredo Settala in Milan or Cassiano Dal Pozzo and Francesco Barberini in Rome. But more relevant for Borromini are the small scale virtuosi, the gentlemen whose formed encyclopedic collections as a mirror of the world, such as Leonardo Agostini, Francesco Angeloni, Francesco Gualdi or Pietro Della Valle, or professionals like the Dutch engineer Cornelis Meijer and the architects G.B. Soria or Martino Longhi the Younger. Borromini shared with these virtuosi an interest in the exuberant creativity of a Lucretian Mother Nature, a passion for the material vestiges of antiquity, insights into the geometry of natural forms. Through his material culture revealed by the inventory we glimpse of the intellectual culture of an otherwise silent genius.

Portraits of Borromini are rare. The famous engraved portrait that appeared in the *Opus Architectonicum* relies on the portrait preserved until recently in the archives of the Confraternity of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. As this commemorates a bequest it must be posthumous, but nevertheless it appears to be a good likeness. Giannini then devised a framework for the portrait that comes from a fictive portrait of Palladio published in Giacomo Leoni's 1716 translation of the *Quattro Libri*. The portrait has a quiet dignity, while the face in Giannini's seems to retreat behind a veil of introspection and melancholy.⁶² It is this printed portrait that Pascoli had in mind

61. Krzysztof Pomian, "La culture de la curiosité," in *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux. Paris, Venise: XVIe - XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1987, pp. 61-80; Joseph Connors, "Virtuoso Architecture in Cassiano's Rome," *Cassiano Dal Pozzo's Paper Museum*, London, 1992, vol. II (*Quaderni Puteani* 3), pp. 23-40; Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994; Paula Findlen, "Scientific Spectacle in Baroque Rome: Athanasius Kircher and the Roman College Museum," *Roma moderna e contemporanea*, III, 1995, pp. 625-65.

62. Reproduced in G. Antonazzi, *Il Palazzo di Propaganda*, Rome, 1979, p. 50; Robert Stalla, "Architektur im Dienst der Politik--Borrominis Kirchenbau der Propaganda Fide in Rom. Ein jesuitischer Bautypus für die Zentrale der Weltmission," *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, XXIX, 1994, pp. 331f.; Francesc Borromini, *Opus Architectonicum*, ed. J. Connors, Milan, 1998, pp. lxxxii-lxxxv and figs. 1-3.

when he described Borromini:

Vestì sempre di nero, e quasi alla spagnuola, ma con parrucca, e basette.⁶³

Pascoli never saw Borromini. We can come closer by looking at the descriptions of Passeri and Bernardo Borromini. They are not easy to interpret, except that they say he dressed formally, did not change according to fashion and always wore black. Passeri, writing less than a decade after Borromini's death, has the fuller description:

volle di continuo comparire col medesimo portamento e abito antico senza voler seguire l'usanza come si pratica giornalmente. Usò la randiglia spagnola e le rose tonde alle scarpe e nella medesima foggia le legacce alle gambe, e nel vestire non si diede a sforgi superflui; ma sempre però civilmente.⁶⁴

Bernardo Borromini says cryptically in 1685:

vestiva alla romana anticha di robba fiorata.⁶⁵

Borromini may have worn a Spanish collar but we should be cautious in reading a political semiotics of dress into his clothes. Black, in particular, was not limited to the Spanish world. Conservative gentlemen in both Protestant and Catholic countries began to wear exclusively black in the later sixteenth century. Of Burgundian origin, the fashion for black transcended political alignments, a phenomenon that has been called "color sharing by enemies." Black was worn equally in states in conflict with Spain, such as the Netherlands and Puritan England, and in lands under their rule, such as Naples and Milan.⁶⁶ It conveyed dignity and seriousness at a high level of society. Ripa's has *Nobility* clad in black.⁶⁷

Black also came to be the color of melancholics, as in Hamlet's "inky cloak" and "customary suits of solemn black" (I.ii.77). It is Borromini's melancholy that is revealed, possibly cultivated, in his constant use of black. In some ways the diagnosis offered by the doctors at Borromini's death was an accurate one in terms of contemporary medicine: "pativa di umore malinconico--o come dicevano li medici di umore ipocondrico." Melancholy was a fashionable disease of creative people in the seventeenth century, the subject of subtle and learned treatises.⁶⁸

Borromini's practice of staying up all night sweating over problems in his drawings betrays the

63. Pascoli 1992 ed., p. 402. "Parucca" in this case means long hair not a wig, and "basette" a moustache not whiskers.

64. Passeri-Hess, p. 365.

65. Bernardo Borromini, in Connors, *Oratory*, p. 160.

66. See the fine treatment in John Harvey, *Men in Black*, Chicago, 1995, especially pp. 41-124.

67. Ripa, p. 384.

68. Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady. A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642*, East Lansing, Michigan, 1951; Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy Religion and Art*, London, 1964.

working habits of a melancholic. By way of contrast, Bernini's predominate humor was choleric; his doctor and many other observers were quick to note the element of fire in his temperament. Borromini's humors, on the other hand, were dark and watery. Melancholy could be a great stimulus to creativity, but it could also accelerate the cycle of retaliatory self-harm that threatened that creativity and in the end brought it to a tragic halt.

What the sources all agree on is that Borromini was the ultimate professional. The Lombard *intagliatore* was bred with stone in his blood and born with a pencil in his hand, and he transformed himself into the most imaginative of architects. Although a cool, classicizing wind began to blow under Alexander VII, writers of the 1670s still appreciated Borromini's high qualities. Passeri, writing in c. 1670-75, says his architecture might be a bit strange and was not to be imitated, but nevertheless he was supremely skillful in technical matters and "un homo ben erudito, intelligente, et assicurato in un perfetto sapere." He designed many imaginative details and never repeated one of them. He was incapable of the commonplace and his imagination so rich it never needed to borrow. His work arrests the eye and the thoughts of the spectator. He had few equals in architecture.⁶⁹

Equally appreciative is the anonymous French author of a guidebook to Rome written in 1677. Though a classicist and scientist by inclination the author admired Borromini's work and sought out his friends, who told him how the architect would stay up all night sweating over problems in his drawings. He was always original and his designs the product of deep study and hard work. To him goes "la gloire de marquer de l'esprit dans tout ce qu'il invente dans l'architecture."⁷⁰

69. Passeri-Hess, p. 365.

70. Joseph Connors and Louise Rice, *Specchio di Roma barocca*, Rome, 1991, pp. xxiv-xxvi, 233, 277.