SAINT SEBASTIAN IN THE RENAISSANCE: THE CLASSICIZATION AND HOMOEROTICIZATION OF A SAINT

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Between his initial appearance in Christian art during the 6th century CE to representations in the Baroque, the iconography of St. Sebastian underwent a significant transformation. The roles that he filled later in this period included devotional figure during the plagues beginning in the mid-14th century, a classicized nude throughout the Renaissance, and a homoerotic figure in Italian Baroque art. During the early Renaissance, artists aimed to emulate the classical Greek nude, but the conservative religious nature of most art at that time created a predicament. As one of the few religious male figures whose partial nudity was considered appropriate by Renaissance society, St. Sebastian was exploited by artists who desired to integrate classical art. In addition to the revitalization of Greek artistic cannons, ancient attitudes towards sexuality were also expressed through Renaissance art. Homoeroticism, and eroticism in general, became a reoccurring theme in Renaissance art, even in works of a religious nature.[1] As a result of the market demand for works in this sexualized style, St. Sebastian became a common homoerotic figure. Despite its prevalence during the Renaissance, the classicization and sexualization of Saint Sebastian would be criticized by many, most notably by the Catholic Church during the Counter-Reformation of the mid to late 16th century. By the 17th century, the iconography of St. Sebastian held little resemblance to his representation during the Medieval period. The purpose of this paper is to examine the circumstances under which it became possible for Saint Sebastian to be used as a homoerotic figure, including his historical artistic representations, contemporaneous homosexual practices in Italy, and an analysis of Guido Reni's many depictions of St. Sebastian.

Due to the controversial nature of this subject, it is important to understand the context through which this iconographical change occurs. According to Jacobus de Voragine, author of the 13th century *Legenda Aurea*, Sebastian was a Roman soldier during the reign of emperors Maximian and Diocletian in the 3rd century. When it was discovered that Sebastian was a Christian, Diocletian ordered him to be tied to a post and shot with arrows. Jacobus de Voragine claims that the soldiers "shot so many arrows into his body that he looked like a porcupine, and left him for dead."[2] Despite this brutality, Sebastian miraculously

survived, only to be beaten to death a short time later at Diocletian's command. In this account, there is no reason to assume St. Sebastian was at all nude during either violent episode. Images of St. Sebastian prior to the 14th century accord with the description of Sebastian given by Jacobus de Voragine. Typically, he is depicted wounded by a multitude of arrows, or shown in the garb of a Roman soldier as is fitting considering his military career. One such example is a 9th century fresco located in the Chiesa di San Giorgio al Velabro (fig. 1), depicting Sebastian as a military man holding a spear and reflecting his identification as a patron saint of soldiers. However, images of Sebastian would remain relatively uncommon until the 14th century, and it is around this time that he became widely associated with protection of a different nature.

St. Sebastian had always been popular in Italy, and particularly in Rome, due to the fact that it was the place of his martyrdom.[3] According to the 8th century *Historia Longobardorum* by Paul the Deacon, in the late 7th century, Rome and Pavia were struck by a deadly epidemic. In this account, relief came to the city of Rome after they constructed an altar dedicated to Saint Sebastian which held his remains.[4] This action was repeated in 1348 in Paris by Foulques de Chanac, the bishop of Paris, when the Black Death began to decimate the city. Relics of St. Sebastian were placed in the Abbey of St. Victor; subsequently, his association with the plague spread across Europe.[5] The claim has also been made that there is a deeper metaphor connecting St. Sebastian with the plague. The argument is that there is a correlation between the pain he underwent during the first attempt on his life by Diocletian's soldiers and that which is suffered by those afflicted by the plague. Additionally, there is a biblical precedent in which arrows represent disease or punishment sent from the divine. For example, in Psalm 64:7, it is stated, "But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded." Also, as Job is suffering from a God-sent affliction, he says, "For the arrows of the almighty are within me."[6] Regardless of the causes for St. Sebastian's new religious role, it is undeniable that the image of St. Sebastian became one of the primary devotional icons in relation to the plague during the Renaissance and that a standard iconography evolved to reflect this status.

Deviating from the earlier 9th century iconography of the saint, by the 14th century, a typical representation of St. Sebastian would present him tied to a post with a varying number of arrows piercing his exposed body. One example of this new iconography is present in a triptych of *The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian and Scenes from his Life* from 1370 (fig. 2), located in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence. In the center panel, Sebastian has a multitude of arrows protruding from his body, which is covered only by a loincloth and shows the blood flowing from his wounds. He has a full beard denoting his mature age, but otherwise, his facial features lack distinction. St. Sebastian's role as intercessor and protector of plague victims also becomes evident in Renaissance art, as in *St. Sebastian Interceding for the*

Plague Stricken by Lieferinxe from 1497-1499 (fig. 3). In this painting, Lieferinxe depicts an urban setting struck by plague with men of the Church praying from books and the people crying for help in streets lined with bodies in shrouds. St. Sebastian is kneeling on a cloud in the sky, and appears to be pleading before a heavenly figure, most likely Saint Peter, on behalf of the people of the city. While he is painted kneeling rather than tied to a post as had become customary, he is still shown mostly nude covered only with a loincloth, and pierced by arrows. The threat of plague in Europe continued for centuries, and consequently, St. Sebastian was assured a continued presence in religious art.

The Black Death of the mid 14th century occurred during an extended period of renewed interest in ancient Greco-Roman art and literature, the catalyst for the Italian Renaissance. There was particular interest surrounding the classical Greek nude, and artists became eager to imitate it. However, this proved problematic considering that a majority of art during the Renaissance was religious in nature. As a result of his association with the plague, and the emphasis placed upon his arrow wounds, St. Sebastian could be appropriately shown with his body exposed, covered only by a loincloth. Theological arguments existed which supported the appropriateness of a nude St. Sebastian. One such claim was that his nudity is compared to that of Christ, whose naked body showed humility before God and whose physical beauty acted as a reflection of his soul's holiness.[7] Utilizing the latter argument, artists were not merely able to justify the nudity of St. Sebastian, but create an idealized figure whose beauty had a religious function. However, this trope was not uniformly agreed upon. In 1592, Pope Clement VIII began a campaign against the use of nudity in religious art, and images of St. Sebastian were among those he found most offensive.[8] It was thought that such works constituted profane art and lacked a true historical depiction of the suffering of the saint.

One well-documented case in which the classicization, and the emerging sexualization, of St. Sebastian became problematic was an altarpiece created by Fra Bartolomeo for the Convent of San Marco in Florence around 1514. According to Giorgio Vasari, a 16th century biographer of Italian artists,

> He [Fra Bartolomeo] painted a picture of S. Sebastian, naked, very lifelike in coloring of the flesh, sweet in countenance, and likewise executed with corresponding beauty of person…. the friars found, through the confessional, women who had sinned at the sight of it, on account of the charm and melting beauty of the lifelike reality imparted to it by the genius of Fra Bartolommeo; for which reason they removed it from the church.[9]

The veracity of this anecdote may be disputed, but the fact that it was deemed plausible by Vasari's adherents implies that such an occurrence was possible. The current location of the painting is unknown,

Fig. 1 Giovanni del Biondo, *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian and Scenes from his Life*, 1370, Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Florence.

Fig. 3 Guido Reni, *St. Sebastian*, 1615, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Photography by Erik Gould.
Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.

Fig. 2 Zacchia il Vecchio (after Fra Bartolomeo), *St. Sebastian*, 1520, San Francisco, Fiesole.

Fig. 4 Guido Reni, *St. Sebastian*,1640-42, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.

but in addition to written accounts about the piece, there is a copy of Fra Bartolomeo's painting located in nearby Fiesole (fig. 4).[10]

Many factors may have led to the removal of the altarpiece. In painting *St. Sebastian*, Fra Bartolomeo took unprecedented steps. In addition to the naturalism of the body, including the figure's lifelike size, the loincloth covering him was minimal and diaphanous. Also, St. Sebastian is in motion, stepping out of his niche rather than fettered to a post.[11] The latter point is particularly important because in St. Sebastian's pose, Bartolomeo intentionally emulates a Florentine sculpture by Jacopo Sansovino from 1512 of a nude Bacchus, the notorious Greek god of wine and festivities. If realized, the connection would most likely have contributed to the decision to remove the painting from San Marco.[12] Fra Bartolomeo created a Christian saint out of Bacchus, a pagan god, in order to demonstrate his skill and emulate the classical Greek nude.

Whatever the reason for the removal of Fra Bartolomeo's painting from San Marco, it demonstrates the attempt of religious authority to censor St. Sebastian's emerging role as a classicized and sexualized figure. However, traditional patronage practices were changing as the Renaissance progressed; artists began to exercise an increased amount of control over their work. In addition to patronage by the Catholic Church, patronage by elite ruling families and wealthy merchants was common in providing art for personal residences and secular public spaces. [13] This meant that no longer did religious authority, alone, control what was considered appropriate in art, even when dealing with religious subject matter.[14] After an in-depth investigation into patronage during the Renaissance, art historian Martin Wackernagel came to the conclusion that there was an "increasing discrepancy between the artistic aims and the actual meaning and purpose of religious art."[15] The St. Sebastian by Fra Bartolomeo is indicative of the desire of the artist to create male nudes in the classical style. Vasari writes that "he [Fra Bartolomeo] had been accused many times of not knowing how to paint nudes; for which reason he resolved to put himself to the test…he painted a picture of S. Sebastian, naked…whereby he won infinite praise from the craftsmen"[16] There was resistance to this trend, as can be seen in the late 15th century rise of Savonarola in Florence, but such attempts were short-lived.[17] As a result, pagan mythology and erotic themes became increasingly prevalent in 16th century Italy.

In addition to the revitalization of classical art in the Renaissance came the rediscovery of ancient literature and social practices. In ancient Greece, male sexuality often involved pederasty and sodomy, and this was reflected in the art, literature, and mythology of the time. Similarly, there is extensive evidence that homosexual practices flourished among male members of society in Italy beginning in the late Medieval period.[18] This predates the apparent Renaissance introduction to Greek homosexual practices, and so the latter cannot be considered to have

directly inspired late Medieval same-sex love. Yet this subculture of homoeroticism was likely later validated and normalized through its similarity to ancient practices, as well as its popularity in Greek mythology and literature. It was also reflected in the art of the time; eroticism, and specifically, homoeroticism, became increasingly common in Italian Renaissance art.[19] Religious art was not immune to this trend, and as a result, many saintly figures became sexualized.[20] Mary Magdalene was particularly subject to this sexualization because of her association with prostitution and physical beauty. As with St. Sebastian, at times, her nudity served a religious purpose as it forced the male voyeur to be inspired by her piety, instead of her sexual attraction.[21] At the time, Titian's *Penitent Magdalen* (1530) was praised by Vasari because "even though it is very beautiful, it moves not to lust, but to pity."[22] Vasari's statement implies that paintings of Mary Magdalene could potentially inspire lust, and in Titian's painting, it is easy to see why. She is an attractive young woman dressed only in her long hair, yet conveniently, her hair and her crossed arms fail to cover either of her breasts. It is evident that some members of the Catholic Church realized this issue and took aggressive aim at eliminating nude or semi-nude figures in religious art. The aforementioned campaign of Pope Clement VIII against what he considered indecent religious art is one such example. He cited nude images of Mary Magdalene, as well as the loinclothed St. Sebastian, as among the most offensive. His edict, *Per gli Altari e Pitture*, attempted to mandate the ways in which religious figures could be portrayed.[23] However, the prevalence of homosexual practices and erotic art in the Renaissance made it impossible even for the Pope to eradicate them completely.

On April 17th, 1432, Florence established a specific investigative authority to enforce pre-existing laws against sodomy. This organization, The Officers of the Night, would continue to operate until 1502.[24] By studying records produced by this department, such as court cases, payment of fines, and individual accounts, historian Michael Rocke was able to form a general assessment of the nature of homosexual practices in Renaissance Florence. He found that in Florence, approximately half of men from all social classes were officially incriminated for sodomy at some point in their lives.[25] As in ancient Greece, these sexual relations often constituted pederasty in which a male over the age of 18 took the active, masculine sexual role. The passive "feminine" role was performed by a boy on average 11 years younger than his dominant partner; typically, the passive males were ages 12 to 18. [26] This sexual practice resulted in a high level of representation of young sexualized boys in art who would have been appealing to older male patrons. Saint Sebastian, in particular, but Ganymede and Cupid as well, became subjects onto which homoeroticism was often easily projected. Despite the establishment of The Officers of the Night, pederasty continued to constitute a social norm for many males in Florence, and punishment was either light or nonexistent.[27] According to Rocke, while Florence received a reputation for same-sex sodomy in the Renaissance, it was hardly the only society in

which this was prevalent. Venice,[28] Valencia, Volterra and many others had similar social practices, despite consistent condemnation by the Catholic Church.[29]

Renaissance artists and intellectuals clearly saw a parallel between the sexual norms of their own society and Greco-Roman views on sexuality. Mythology heavily imbued with sexual ambiguity in the behaviors of Zeus, Ganymede, and Hyacinth were commonly represented in Renaissance art.[30] Images of Ganymede were often created with homoerotic intent, as can be seen in works by Parmigianino, Correggio, Michelangelo, and Cellini. According to Greek mythology, Ganymede was a beautiful Trojan youth abducted by Zeus who, in the form of an eagle, brought Ganymede to Mount Olympus to be the cupbearer to the gods and also Zeus's lover. Through Ganymede, artists were able to present a sexualized figure of youthful androgyny. The popularity of boyish figures such as Ganymede corresponded with a prevalence of pederasty in society.[31]

Benvenuto Cellini was in the employ of Cosimo di Medici in 1545 when he began to work on a sculpture of *Ganymede and the Eagle*. Cosimo had acquired a broken marble torso of classical origins, and Cellini suggested that by adding limbs, a head, and an eagle, he could "christen it Ganymede."[32] Following the myth, Cellini sculpted a beautiful nude youth with an idealized yet adolescent body and musculature. In this sculpture, however, Ganymede seems to play a role in his own seduction. The eagle is half the size of Ganymede, removing the sense of domination and force inherent in a great number of Renaissance representations of Ganymede and Zeus. Additionally, Cellini's Ganymede tenderly caresses the feathers on the eagle's neck and playfully teases the eagle with a bird clutched in his raised hand.[33] In this instance, the homoerotic nature of *Ganymede and the Eagle* was clearly intended by Cellini, and homoeroticism became a theme in many of his other sculptural pieces.[34] Cellini's own homosexual predilections were well-known, and he subsequently faced persecution by the judicial courts of Florence.[35] The social and religious condemnation of erotic, including homoerotic, practices and art was magnified during the Counter-Reformation. The Council of Trent, convened in 1545 and lasting until 1563, placed greater restrictions on permissible subject matter in art, as well as artistic style, and there was a particular condemnation of pagan and sexual themes.[36] Ganymede was an example of both, and as a result, his popularity in Italian art declined.[37] As time passed, however, figures like St. Sebastian, St. John the Baptist, and Susanna were increasingly employed in erotic art since pagan themes had become impermissible.[38]

The disapproval of the Counter-Reformation Catholic church was not sufficient to eradicate erotic and homoerotic themes in art completely. Renaissance thinkers and artists continued to create homoerotic art from pagan myths, and also religious subjects within their own societal context. It is apparent in Vasari's account of Fra Bartolomeo's *St. Sebastian* that this religious saint was capable of

inciting lust. While Vasari refers only to female attraction to the saint, male sexual response would be plausible as well, especially given the prevalence of homosexual practices in Florence at this time as proposed by Rocke. However, it is later, primarily in the 17th century, that the portrayal of St. Sebastian transitioned from a generically sexualized figure to a specifically homoerotic one. This is not to say that all artistic representations of St. Sebastian from this time period can be termed homoerotic, but it is clear that the demand for St. Sebastians painted in a homoerotic trope grew. The homoerotic potential of Saint Sebastian would be realized by numerous artists in the 16th and 17th century, including Carlo Saraceni, Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, and Guido Reni. The latter, in particular, utilized St. Sebastian to create homoerotic art, and painted the saint approximately nine times from 1610-1642. While there has been debate over the attribution of all of these paintings to Reni, his workshop, or his followers, their homoerotic implications are consistent. These nine paintings fall into three compositional groups, each of which emphasizes the youthful beauty of Saint Sebastian, rather than religious devotion or suffering.

Guido Reni was born in 1575 in Bologna, where he became an apprentice to artist Denis Calvaert at the age of nine. He later studied under Annibale Carracci and spent a significant part of his career in Rome. Many details of Reni's personal and professional life are known from the book *Felsina Pittrice, vite de' pittori bolognesi* published in 1678 by Bolognese art historian Carlo Cesare Malvasia, a peer of Reni's.[39] Early in his career, Reni established himself as one of the foremost fresco painters in Rome.[40] Despite this success, in 1615 Reni returned to Bologna and began to work almost exclusively on canvas. Throughout his career, Reni's artistic style evolved and, alternately, contained elements of mannerism, the Caravaggesque, and naturalism. One of the most renowned and constant elements of Reni's art is the grace and nobility with which he imbues his subjects, a quality which is apparent in many of his paintings of St. Sebastian. His paintings so well captured the beauty and grace of his subjects that Malvasia once queried, who, when viewing Reni's angels, "does not feel carried off into sweetest ecstasy."[41] It seems that Reni's contemporaries realized the potential of his paintings to evoke an emotional response in the viewer.

Historical documents have also provided insight into Reni's personal life and behaviors. According to his contemporaries, Reni was fearful of women and asexual to the extent that he rejected all personal relationships with women, with the exception of his mother.[42] This misogyny had implications on his artistic career; Malvasia wrote that when dealing with female models Reni, "always looked like marble when observing [them] with whom he never wanted to be shut up and left alone while drawing."[43] Despite this aversion to women, Reni himself was considered by his peers as androgynous, he even admitted to depicting himself as a beautiful woman in one of his murals.[44] Androgyny and transvestism cannot be immediately translated into homosexuality, but as dis-

tinguished Reni scholar Richard Spear notes, Reni's disposition towards androgyny and sexuality are manifested in the way he eroticized some of his male and female subjects.[45]

The *St. Sebastian* by Reni in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, painted around 1615, demonstrates the intent of the artist to create a work of art with homoerotic characteristics. As with previous images of Ganymede, Reni's painting reflects the homosexual practice of pederasty by presenting the viewer with a youthful and semi-androgynous beauty. This image would be appreciated by older male *voyeurs* of the painting, but possibly women, as well. The positioning of St. Sebastian's arms tied above his head place the body on display, and even though his torso is idealized and more mature than the face, it is not an example of exaggerated masculine musculature as found in many classicized nudes; it retains a youthful quality. There are two arrows visibly protruding from his body, but they are placed so that they do not detract from its perfection, virtually blending into the darkened background. The few drops of blood that these arrows produce are also easily overlooked in anything but a close examination. When compared to Reni's *St. Sebastian* at the Pinoteca Capitolina (1615), Rome, and in Palazzo Rosso (1615-1616), Genoa, they appear almost identical in composition. However, the *St. Sebastian* at RISD has a much darker background and landscape, in contrast to the illuminating light covering St. Sebastian's body, especially the torso, which glows with light. The St. Sebastian of Rome demonstrates a narrative element: in the background of both paintings, a retinue of soldiers and horses can be seen retreating from the saint, and the arrows with which they tried to kill him are clearly visible on the saint's torso. Only one of these figures is easily discernable in the St. Sebastian at RISD, while the others are obscured by the darkness of the background. It is unlikely that this comparative darkness is due to the application of a varnish or lack of cleaning considering that the canvas in not uniformly darkened.[46] The isolation of the figure emphasizes the hegemony of the body, and hence, its sexual appeal, instead of the religious narrative. One of the most prominent features about the RISD Saint Sebastian is its size. Even though he is shown in a three quarter view, the body is scaled to life. This factor, along with the realism of the image, creates an intimate encounter between the viewer and the saint which is conducive to interpreting the painting in a sensual, if not sexual, manner.[47]

Reni would return to the figure of St. Sebastian years later in 1640, but this time, he departed from both the tenebrism and the realism demonstrated in his earlier paintings. Despite this change in style, many of the same homoerotic elements remain in Reni's *St. Sebastian* at the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna (1640-42). In this painting, there are no arrows to designate the identity of the adolescent; however, he is tied to tree and clothed with a scant loincloth as in Reni's other Sebastians and according to the trope. The youthful beauty of Reni's St. Sebastians, as well as man of his other religious subjects, is

the grazie with which he imbues his subjects. Despite the pain of his martyrdom, St. Sebastian realizes that his actions will bestow upon him God's love, and this causes bliss. [48] Regardless of the religious basis for this ecstasy, this factor could, in and of itself, create a sexualized figure.[49] Theoretically, at least, the youthful androgyny of Reni's St. Sebastians could serve the dual purpose of religious grace and a sexualized youth who could appeal to mature, male patrons.[50] Spear acknowledges that it is impossible to conclude decisively that Reni's work evoked sexual responses from 17th century viewers, but he believes that there is a clear homoerotic potential in some of Reni's male subjects, most notably those of St. Sebastian.[51]

Reni's own sexuality and its influence on his art is a matter of debate. It is possible that Reni participated in homosexual practices, but in the end, his homoerotic treatment of St. Sebastian cannot be wholly attributed to his personal sexual preferences. Despite the fact that artists at this time were beginning to have greater control over their work, they would not continue to work exclusively in a style for which there was no market demand. In many cases, economic motivations would have had far greater influences on style than the sexual preference of the artist. This is especially true in the case of Reni, who was renowned for his preoccupation with his finances and the way that his wages compared to those of his peers.[52] Unlike contemporary artists such as Annibale Carracci and Bernini, Reni did not set a price for the paintings he sold. Rather, he would force a potential buyer to make a price offer, which often exceeded the standard market price for similar paintings.[53]

It could be argued that Reni's homoerotic work was, in fact, a result of his own sexual preference and that patrons simply bought this work because they wanted a piece of the Reni brand. However, the prevalence of same-sex love during this time, the absence of a functional free art market in Italy, and other examples of a market demand for homoerotic work by other artists work against this claim. With regard to the latter, Parmigianino's *Cupid Carving his Bow* uses homoerotic elements similar to portrayals of St. Sebastian: Cupid is a full-length nude portrayed as a youthful, androgynous beauty. The knife positioned above his thigh is also thought to have a phallic allusion.[54] Like Reni's *St. Sebastian*, many copies were made of this painting, again demonstrating the market demand for homoerotic art.[55] Carlo Saraceni, in particular, did little to hide the homoerotic message of his paintings. In his *St. Sebastian* from 1610-1616, the saint has been removed from the customary post, and is reclining on red tapestry beside which is his discarded soldier's armor. The cloth covering the saint appears to be less of a loincloth than a strategically-placed sheet reminiscent of the bedroom. Similar to Reni's paintings, Saraceni presents a youthful nude with an idealized body. However, unlike Reni, the arrow is not hidden; rather, it is displayed prominently on the lower torso. St. Sebastian's head is thrown back in an ecstasy beyond the religious to the sexual. This combination of heavenly spirituality and earthly sexuality would

continue to permeate religious art throughout the 17th century, Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* being a prominent example.[56] Similar to Saraceni's *Saint Sebastian*, Bernini's saint is reclined with a single arrow aimed at her lower abdomen, her head thrown back in ecstasy.

As a result of the homoerotic elements present in many artistic representations of Saint Sebastian during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, a modern cult of homosexuality surrounding St. Sebastian grew.[57] Yet, this does not mean that every image of St. Sebastian from this period is, by necessity, homoerotic. Artwork from this time which can be interpreted in this manner often shares similar elements which are conducive to its potential interpretation as homoerotic. In the art of Reni and his contemporaries, such indicators include the homosexual practices of the society in which they appeared, the androgyny of the figures, the youthful age of the figures, and the level of potential interaction between the sexualized figure and the male *voyeur*, be it the patron or the artist, both of whom were overwhelmingly male. The sexual practices of certain Italian regional societies at this time were conducive to many of these indicators and can be used to contextualize the high number of Italian artists in the late 16th and 17th century who produced homoerotic art. Additionally, the erotic nature of Greek art and literature acted as a legitimate outlet for expression of both heterosexual and homosexual desire. Even though not all male nudes in art were influenced by this eroticism, certainly, a great number were shaped by the Greek perception of the ideal male nude. As a religious figure whose nudity was considered appropriate, St. Sebastian came to be commonly presented in both forms, and a particular conduit for male homosexual desire.

ENDNOTES

1 Andrea Bayer, et al, *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: 2008), 178.
2 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 100.
3 Otto Gecser, *Promoting the Saints* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2010), 262n.
4 Paul the Decon, *History of the Lombards*, trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), 255.
5 Gecser, *Promoting the Saints*, 264.
6 Joseph P. Byrne, *The Black Death* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 94.
7 Beverly Louise Brown, *The Genius of Rome 1592-1623* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 281.
8 Ibid., 276.
9 Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, (Florence, 1550), trans. Gaston du c. de Vere (New York: Random House, 1996), 676.
10 Janet Cox-Rearick, "Fra Bartolomeo's St. Mark Evangelist and St. Sebastian with an Angel," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 18 (1974): 348-349.
11 Ibid., 348-349.
12 Ibid., 350.
13 Martin Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Artists* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2011), 295.
14 Bram Kempers, *Painting Power and Patronage* (London: Penguin Press: 1992), 303.
15 Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Artist*, 293.
16 Vasari, Lives, 676.
17 Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Artist*, 293.
18 Bayer, *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, 183.
19 Ibid., 178.
20 Brown, *The Genius of Rome*, 277, 288.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 27.
24 Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendship: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1996), 45.
25 Ibid., 146.
26 Ibid., 88.
27 Ibid., 15.
28 Ibid., 162.
29 Ibid., 133.
30 Bayer, *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, 181.
31 James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1986), 77.
32 Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance*, 145.
33 In ancient Greece the gift of a bird was used to signify courting in a homosexual affair, ibid., 148.
34 Ibid., 152-155.
35 Ibid., 150.
36 Ibid., 161.
37 Ibid.,162.
38 Brown, *The Genius of Rome*, 290.
39 Richard E. Spear, *The "Divine" Guido* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 12.
40 Ibid., 31.
41 Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice (1678)*, eds. G Zanotti et al. (Bologna, 1841), 15-16.
42 Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 51.
43 Malvasia, Felsina Pittrice, 53.
44 Spear, 54.
45 Ibid., 60.
46 Email with RISD conservator, Ingrid Neuman. October 26, 2011.
47 Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 76.
48 Ibid., 127.
49 Ibid., 127.
50 A curious resemblance exists between the pose of the Cupid like character in Reni's painting of "Sacred and Profane Love" (1622) and another version of St. Sebastian by Reni located at the Prado (1617). In the former, Profane Love is shown tied to a post with his hands tied behind him, and his position is identical, though reversed, of the Prado St. Sebastian. Both figures are placed on the edge of the canvas with a similar, and distinct, skyline next to them. Perhaps the association of both Cupid and Sebastian with arrows can explain this similarity, but maybe it was also intended by Reni as a comment on the profane status of the homoerotic love which many images of St. Sebastian represented and encouraged.
51 Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 74.
52 Ibid., 211.

53 Ibid., 213.
54 Bayer, *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, 187.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 288.
57 Spear, *The "Divine" Guido*, 73.