

Making a Martyr: Preserving and Creating Cultural Identity through Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* (1608)

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Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* (1608) once hung above the high altar in Santa Lucia al Sepolcro (Figure 1). The commission coincided with the first major documented renovations to the Siracusan basilica, which was erected in 1103.¹ The Sicilian city's strong historic and religious affiliation with Lucy, its patron saint, is concretized at Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. Lucy was a native of Siracusa, suffering her martyrdom in 304 CE, when she was stabbed in the throat after she survived several other attempts on her life.² Jacobus de Voragine ends her *passio* with a reference to a church, stating "And as soon as [Saint Lucy] had received the blessed sacrament she rendered and gave up her soul to God...In that same place is a church edified in the name of her."³ Lucy's relics were held in the church's crypt until they were removed in 1040 to Constantinople.⁴ Santa Lucia al Sepolcro is this church, occupying a position of physical significance in Lucy's hagiography in the early modern period. It served as a monument that marked the exact location of her triumphal martyrdom and as a site for the perpetuation of her cult. Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* was thus a culturally significant and site-specific commission for Santa Lucia al Sepolcro and the city of Siracusa, as it placed a visual simulacrum of Lucy's death and burial where the event originally occurred.

The *Burial of Saint Lucy* has not received as much attention as other works by Caravaggio, largely because the

artist's Sicilian period is the least studied phase of his work.⁵ Thus, while prior scholarship has elucidated the ways in which Caravaggio's painting of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* was informed by local tradition and culture primarily through iconographic analysis, there has been no comprehensive study of the painting's afterlife—that is, the way it was received in the centuries following its creation. This paper constructs an afterlife of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* in order to identify Caravaggio's altarpiece as an active cultural agent, which, being conceived out of its specific civic and religious landscape, shapes those same identities after its installation.⁶ A multigenerational scope illuminates this afterlife; it maps shifting viewer responses of the painting manifested in copies and guidebooks. This paper proposes an entirely new method for the study of Caravaggio in Sicily, foregrounding the objects and texts that preserve the reception of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. These materials act as indices for Siracusan conceptions of the altarpiece since they are the visual or textual result of interpretations of the painting at various points in its afterlife.

The narrative moment and iconography of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* are specific to Siracusan religious beliefs, local traditions, and surrounding geographies, imbuing the altarpiece with site-specific resonance.⁷ Caravaggio paints Lucy's corpse lying on the ground with a slit on her neck, holding a limp martyr's palm in her right hand. The depiction of Lucy after her death emphasizes the status of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro as her martyrdom site.⁸ The intense corporeality of the dead saint would have likely been considered indecorous if installed anywhere other than Santa Lucia al Sepolcro,

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- 1 For a short architectural history of the church, see: Santi Luigi Agnello, "S. Lucia al Sepolcro," in *Siracusa: Quattro Edifici Religiosi*, ed. Lucia Trigilia (Syracuse, IT: Ediprint S.r.l., 1990), 41. Any documents recording the commission of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* have been lost. Francesco Susinno's *vite* of Caravaggio, published in 1724, does chronicle the commission. In his description of the circumstances surrounding the commission, Susinno claims that Mario Minniti, a native Sicilian and artist Caravaggio met in Rome, facilitated the artist's transaction with the city's Senate. Francesco Susinno, *Le Vite de' Pittori Messinesi*, trans. Valentino Martinelli (Florence, IT: Felice Le Monnier, 1960), 110.
- 2 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, vol. 2, trans. William Caxton, ed. F.S. Ellis (London, UK: Temple Classics, 1900). Fordham University Medieval Source Book, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/>, accessed: 29 November 2017.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Paul Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 118.

- 5 Many paintings from this period are lost today and little documentary evidence survives, making it difficult to produce the comprehensive studies that are typical of Caravaggio's earlier periods.
- 6 In my discussion of agency, I adopt the anthropological model proposed by Alfred Gell in 1998, which examines the ways in which an art object acts as an agent on that which he terms a "patient." For an overview of Gell's agent/patient model see: Alfred Gell, "The Theory of the Art Nexus," in *Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1998): 12-27.
- 7 Danielle Carrabino, "'Ascondersi per la Scilia': Caravaggio in Sicily" (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, 2011), 61.
- 8 Many scholars nod to this connection. See specifically: Lorenzo Pericolo, "Narratives of the Non-Finito: On Caravaggio's *Denial of Saint Peter*, *The Burial of Saint Lucy*, and *The Resurrection of Lazarus*" in Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: *Dislocating the Istorya in Early Modern Painting* (London, UK: Harvey Miller, 2011), 427; and Carrabino, "Caravaggio in Sicily," 60.

where she died and was interred.⁹ A bishop stands to the right of the scene, raising his right hand in blessing. This figure is consistent with Jacobus de Voragine's account of Lucy receiving her last communion from a Roman priest.¹⁰ Alessandro Zuccari has identified him as San Marziano, the first bishop of Siracusa, placing the figure firmly within a local historical context.¹¹

A flat wall stretches across the upper half of the canvas, interrupted only by a large archway on the left side, for which two iconographic identifications have been made, both placing Caravaggio's saint and mourners within the landscape of Siracusa. The rounded arch is discussed by Alessandro Zuccari as an explicit reference to the crypt of San Marziano, the site where Saint Paul preached in 59 AD to introduce the island to Christianity.¹² Conversely, Maurizio Marini identifies the compositional void and arch as a reference to Siracusa's famous caves or *latomie*, stone quarries that were used as prisons in antiquity by Siracusan tyrants, which Caravaggio visited with humanist Vincenzo Mirabella.¹³

Danielle Carrabino and Roberta Lapucci have independently shown that Caravaggio was expressly interested in incorporating Siracusan cultural identity into the *Burial of Saint Lucy*.¹⁴ A *pentimento*, seen in x-radiographs, shows that Caravaggio first painted Lucy's head severed from her body before opting for Lucy's corpse to be shown with a small slit on her neck.¹⁵ Lucy's Greek *passio*, rather than her Latin hagiography, describes Lucy's decapitation in her martyrdom.¹⁶ This Eastern tradition is reflective of the cultural fluidity of Sicily, which stemmed from shifts in control during the Middle Ages between the Byzantine Empire, Arabs, and Norman kings and, by the time of Caravaggio, the Spanish

crown.¹⁷ Although the artist ultimately decided to observe Lucy's Latin hagiography in his final composition, the *pentimento* demonstrates that Caravaggio considered Siracusa's distinct cultural heritage. This, combined with site-specific iconography shows that upon its creation the *Burial of Saint Lucy* was imbued with the spatial identities of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro and Siracusa.

Two Siracusan-produced copies after the *Burial of Saint Lucy*, show that it was inserted into the visual fabric of Siracusa after being installed in Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.¹⁸ The copies demonstrate the pervasiveness of Caravaggio's composition within Siracusa, as they inserted the *Burial* into a multiplicity of contexts.¹⁹ Mario Minniti painted a copy after the *Burial of Saint Lucy* before 1640 in oil on copper, a format that likely would have been commissioned by a Siracusan patron for personal devotion or study (Figure 2).²⁰ Minniti's painting represents a personal investment in the *Burial of Saint Lucy* on the part of a Siracusan patron. In seventeenth-century Italy, paintings on copper support were typically private commissions because the material was more expensive than alternatives and was only produced in small scale.²¹ The patron who commissioned Minniti's copy

9 Issues of decorum are discussed in relation to a few altarpieces by Caravaggio. Perhaps the altarpiece with the most direct visual connection to the *Burial* is the *Death of the Virgin*, which was rejected from Santa Maria della Scala. For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding its rejection, see Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio: The Artist and his Work* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), 184.

10 Voragine, *The Golden Legend*.

11 Alessandro Zuccari, *Arte e committenza nella Roma di Caravaggio* (Turin, IT: ERI, Edizioni Rai, 1984), 157–8.

12 This is also where San Marziano, the first bishop of Siracusa, was martyred and buried. Alessandro Zuccari, "La pala di Siracusa e il tema della sepoltura in Caravaggio," in *L'Ultimo Caravaggio e la cultura artistica a Napoli in Sicilia e a Malta*, ed. Maurizio Calvesi (Syracuse, IT: Ediprint, 1987), 147–175; Carrabino, "Caravaggio in Sicily," 74.

13 Maurizio Marini, *Michelangelo da Caravaggio* (Rome, IT: Studio B, Betetti e Bozzi, 1974), 444; Ebert-Schifferer, *Caravaggio*, 228–229; also see Vincenzo Mirabella, *Dichiarazioni della pianta dell'antiche Siracuse, e d'alcune scelte medaglie d'esse, e de' principi che quelle possederterò descritte da don Vincenzo Mirabella e Alagona caualier siracusano* (Naples, IT: Lazzaro Scoriggio, 1613), 89.

14 Carrabino, "Caravaggio in Sicily," 82–83; Gioacchino Barbera and Roberta Lapucci, *Il seppellimento di Santa Lucia del Caravaggio: Indagini radiografiche e riflettografiche* (Syracuse, IT: Galleria Regionale di Palazzo Bellomo), 1996.

15 For x-radiographs, see *Ibid.*, 41.

16 Barbera and Lapucci, *Il seppellimento di Santa Lucia*, 41.

17 For information on the way in which these cultures mixed and were preserved in Sicily see Hubert Houben, "Between Occidental and Oriental Cultures: Norman Sicily as a 'Third Space'?" in *Norman Tradition and Transcultural Heritage: Exchange of Cultures in the 'Norman' Peripheries of Medieval Europe*, ed. Stefan Burkhardt and Thomas Foerster (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 20–33. For a complete history of Sicily see Denis Mack Smith, *A History of Sicily: Medieval Sicily, 800–1713* (London, UK: Chatto & Windus, 1968).

18 There are five extant painted copies of Caravaggio's altarpiece in a range of media and scale. For a full list see Gioacchino Barbera, "The Burial of Saint Lucy," in *Caravaggio: the Final Years* (Naples, IT: Electa in Napoli, 2005), 124. Although there are relatively few extant copies after the *Burial of Saint Lucy* compared to other paintings by Caravaggio, their survival demonstrates the *Burial*'s relative popularity in Siracusa, especially when taking into account its physical isolation and lack of accessibility.

19 The copy occupies a looming position in early modern art history – the disparity between Renaissance and modern notions of originality and invention characterizing much of existing scholarship. For a short overview of the subject, see Richard Spear, "Notes on Renaissance and Baroque Originals and Originality," *Studies in the History of Art* 20 (1989): 97. The copy in Caravaggio scholarship is typically used as a means of dating or authentication and as a way to ascertain artistic taste. Alfred Moir, *Caravaggio and his Copyists* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1976) is representative of such methods. See specifically chapters "Copies as a Means of Authentication" and "Copies as a Mark of Taste."

20 This copy was first attributed to Minniti by Maurizio Marini in 2005 and was accepted by Lorenzo Pericolo. Maurizio Marini, *Caravaggio: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio "pictor praestantissimus"* (Rome, IT: Newton Compton, 2005), 547; Pericolo, "Narratives of the Non-Finito," 428. The presence of Minniti in Siracusa after the installation of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* is supported by known dates of his travel. Minniti was there by May of 1606 and there is no reason to doubt Susinno's narrative that he was present for the 1608 commissioning of the *Burial* and stayed until his death in 1640. See John Gash, "Mario Minniti. Syracuse," *The Burlington Magazine* 146, no. 1218 (2004): 639. For a discussion of the function of paintings in private spaces, see Sandra Richards, "Caravaggio's Roman Collectors," in *Caravaggio and his followers in Rome*, ed. David Franklin and Sebastian Schütze (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 58.

21 *Copper as Canvas: two centuries of masterpiece paintings on copper, 1575–1775*, exhibition catalogue (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3–8.

could have encountered it as both an object for personal devotion and as an artistic marvel fit for a *studiolo*.²² The radiant nature of the support would have imbued the copy with a luminosity ascribed to religious objects of devotion, the subject matter carrying particular local resonance.²³ Additionally, small paintings on copper were often considered extraordinary objects with jewel-like surfaces alongside other curious materials such as alabaster, lapis lazuli, and ivory.²⁴ Minniti's copy inserts a monumental public altarpiece into a private realm, demonstrating the resonance that Caravaggio's *Burial of Saint Lucy* had across the social spheres of Siracusa.

Pietro Rizzo's silver panel after the *Burial of Saint Lucy*, the front facet of a box on which a silver statue of Lucy was carried in procession, occupies an important public position in the cult of the Saint in Siracusa and demonstrates the religious potency of Caravaggio's composition.²⁵ The box and statue were part of a major commission in 1620 that was initiated by the Senate and local religious officials to reassert the association of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro with Lucy's martyrdom.²⁶ The processional box transported Caravaggio's composition through the streets of Siracusa in one of the most public spectacles of sixteenth-century Italy. Rizzo's silver copy illustrates the semiotic resonance of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* in Siracusa. His translation of Caravaggio's painting into a different medium is comprised of only the most salient aspects of the composition. In addition to the dead Saint, Rizzo retains the proportionally gigantic gravediggers, the bishop, the most emotive mourners, and the nod to an arched architectural setting. Rizzo's preservation of the arch is a tacit acknowledgment of the site-specific relationship of the *Burial* to its church and city. His addition of a tiered background landscape punctuated by trees shows his desire to visually ground Lucy's life within Siracusa.²⁷ Rizzo's en-

agement with Caravaggio's composition demonstrates one of the ways in which the painting was embedded into the visual landscape of Siracusa. The silver panel transported the composition through the city—with each street through which it was carried in procession, it achieved stronger spatial ties to the fabric of Siracusa.

These two copies demonstrate the local resonance of Caravaggio's composition throughout multiple social and religious spheres. The *Burial of Saint Lucy* was circulated through the visual landscape of Siracusa in the form of private devotional copies and a processional object. The proliferation of Caravaggio's image in the city would have increased the local status of the high altarpiece and Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. In this way, the *Burial of Saint Lucy* was inserted into the identity of the church. The ability of such a painting to retain visual, religious, and cultural potency after the initial awe dissipated demonstrates that the *Burial of Saint Lucy* became an integral part of both public and private spheres in Siracusa.

After the end of the eighteenth century, no known copies after the *Burial of Saint Lucy* were produced. However, reception of the painting can be tracked through several guidebooks written on Siracusa and Sicily that establish the relationship between Caravaggio's canvas and Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. Sicilian published examples include Salvatore Lanza's *Guida del Viaggiatore in Sicilia* (1859) and Enrico Mauceri's *Guida di Siracusa* (1908), offering a local perspective of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.²⁸ These place the painting within a context of tourism and civic pride, implicit in which is the local cult of the saint. Although published in Italian, it is possible that these guidebooks were intended for educated foreign readers to use while visiting the city or to peruse as an armchair traveller. After 1825, the increased systems of steam transportation decreased the cost and increased the speed of travel, allowing for massive quantities of the British and continental populations to experience what had previously been reserved for only the most privileged.²⁹

Perhaps the most apparent textual counterpart to the guidebook in this study is the artist's biography. Where the guidebooks elucidate the spatial relationship between painting, church, and city, the biographies chronicle artists' lives, assert their artistic significance, and build their mythology.³⁰

22 Christopher Nygren establishes the ability of a painting's substrate to take on meaning. Christopher J. Nygren, "Titian's *Ecce Homo* on Slate: Stone, Oil, and the Transubstantiation of Painting," *Art Bulletin* 99, no. 1 (2017): 36-66.

23 *Copper as Canvas*, 14.

24 *Ibid.*, 10-11.

25 Rizzo is also responsible for this statue. The other panels on the *cassa* depict: Saint Lucy giving alms to the poor; the interrogation of the Saint; the trial of fire; the immobilized Lucy tied to the oxen; and Lucy receiving her last communion. Marina Russo, "La statua e la cassa di S. Lucia nell'ambito della produzione orafa a Siracusa," in *Il Barocco in Sicilia tra conoscenza e conservazione*, ed. Marcello Fagiolo dell'Arco and Lucia Triglia (Syracuse, IT: Ediprint, 1987), 125-143; for an image of the panel see page 127. Both objects are still carried in Lucy's feast day processions in Siracusa today.

26 Gioacchino Barbera and Donatella Spagnolo, "From the *Burial of Saint Lucy* to the *Scenes of the Passion*: Caravaggio in Syracuse and Messina," in *Caravaggio: the Final Years* (Naples, IT: Electa in Napoli, 2005), 81. Russo, "La statua e la cassa di S. Lucia," 128. The statue may have been commissioned in 1600, but payment issues kept the *cassa* from being completed until 1620. Russo also argues that the commission was meant to establish Siracusa as a center of silver production in competition with Palermo and Messina.

27 This same effort is evident in the panels depicting Lucy's interrogation and last communion, which feature several buildings, including fortifications and Roman architecture. See Russo, "La statua e la cassa di S. Lucia," 129 and 132-133.

28 Salvatore Lanza, *Guida del Viaggiatore in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1859); and Enrico Mauceri, *Guida di Siracusa* (Syracuse, 1908).

29 James Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47-48. The use of these guidebooks in travel is corroborated by their inclusion of such details as prices of transportation, places of lodging, and the locations of foreign consulates; see, for instance, Lanza, *Guida del Viaggiatore in Sicilia*, IX – XXVI, and Mauceri, *Guida di Siracusa*, 3-6.

30 For discussion of early modern biographers and the way they intentionally shaped Caravaggio's life see Philip Sohm, "Caravaggio's Deaths," *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 3 (2002), 449-468; and Catherine Puglisi, "Caravaggio's Life and Lives over Four Centuries," in *Caravaggio: Realism, Rebellion, Reception*, ed. Genevieve Warwick (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware, 2006) 23-35.

Biographies on the life of Caravaggio are notable manifestations of the biographer's agenda, a result of the artist's polarizing reputation and controversial tenebrism, which precipitated Caravaggio's fall from artistic favor in mainland Italy shortly after his death.³¹ It is therefore puzzling that the nineteenth-century Siracusan guidebooks acknowledge his fame and conflate it with the religious and historic significance of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, until Caravaggio's reputation in Sicily is considered.³² The guidebook and the biography can work in tandem to triangulate the relationship between the *Burial of Saint Lucy*, the reputation of Caravaggio in the centuries following his death, and the spatial identity of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.

Guidebooks and travelogues published by British authors provide a foreign analogue to local travel literature, illuminating how Siracusan people may have conceptualized the status of Caravaggio's altarpiece in relation to Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. British accounts of the city make it apparent that the church primarily occupied a local position of pride that was not reflected in transcontinental interests. In his *Travels through Sicily and the Lipari Islands in the Month of December* (1824), Naval Officer Edward Boid recounts his experiences during the feast days of Saint Lucy including a decidedly skeptical description of the procession of Rizzo's silver statue and box from the cathedral to Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, exclaiming that it seemed closer to heathenism than Christianity.³³ Boid mentions in a note that he looked in vain at the church for the *Burial of Saint Lucy* "which gained [Caravaggio] the veneration of the Syracusans."³⁴

The John Murray Publishing Firm published *A Handbook for Travellers in Sicily* in 1864 that included an entry for Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.³⁵ The book describes the history of the church, including its Norman construction and a brief mention of Lucy's martyrdom.³⁶ Written at the close of the Grand Tour's golden age, publications such as these focus on

sites that exhibit Siracusa's ancient past, reflecting heightened interest in antiquity.³⁷ The handbook ascribes the importance of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro not to the *Burial of Saint Lucy*, which it proclaims to be "more remarkable for size than merit," but rather to its historical significance to the city.³⁸ This particular comment demonstrates a lack of respect for Caravaggio in British society, which is contrasted by publications produced in Sicily. When British literature does show an interest in Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, it is embedded within the antique and medieval origins of the church rather than awe for the *Burial of Saint Lucy* or veneration of a religious site.

In contrast to the British travelogue and guidebook, the Sicilian guidebooks demonstrate a desire to assert the international significance of a church with a strong connection to Siracusa's religious past. A close reading of Salvatore Lanza and Enrico Mauceri's brief descriptions of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro illuminates the identity that local nineteenth-century travel writers ascribed to the church and their attempts to insert it into the city's antique character. In his *Guida del Viaggiatore in Sicilia*, Lanza lists Santa Lucia al Sepolcro as one of three sites to visit in the Acradina quarter in Siracusa, only reporting that the church houses "a painting by Michelangelo da Caravaggio depicting the death of Saint Lucy."³⁹ While this statement has very little descriptive substance, its context sheds light on Lanza's conception of the importance of the church and Caravaggio's painting. Lanza does not mention the hagiographic significance of the church as Lucy's martyrdom site, only noting the artist and subject matter of the altarpiece. His choice of description here is essentially an identifier for the church. He has distilled Santa Lucia down to its defining attribute: the presence of a Caravaggio painting. Lanza puts enough stake in Caravaggio's reputation to include it in his description of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, a decision that is incongruent with the artist's fall from favor in the years following his death. It is possible that Lanza's perception of Caravaggio's former presence in Sicily mimics that of Francesco Susinno in the eighteenth century. Susinno includes the artist, originally from Lombardy, in his *Le Vite de' pittori Messini*, asserting Caravaggio as Sicilian through the simple act of including his biography in the collection of artists otherwise native to the island.⁴⁰ Here, Susinno and Lanza treat the artist as a point of pride for the city and island instead of debasing his artistic merit.

Lanza's interest in the antique character of the city, rather than in local hagiography, is revealed in the sites he places alongside Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. This may be attributed to the interest in antiquity that was pervasive during the age of the Grand Tour. In Lanza's list, Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, dedicated in 1103, is preceded by a Roman bath site and followed by an

31 Puglisi, "Caravaggio's Life," 32-33; Giovanni Pietro Bellori, "Life of Michelangelo Merisi de Caravaggio," in *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Alice Sedgwick Wohl (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177-189; Giovanni Baglione, *Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori, et Architetti*, ed. Jacob Hess and Herwarth Röttgen (Vatican City, IT: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1995). Caravaggio's biographies by Giovanni Pietro Bellori and Giovanni Baglione are advanced by an aesthetically driven agenda, defending classicism in their debasement of Caravaggio's naturalism. For discussion, see Sohm, "Caravaggio's Deaths," 450.

32 Carrabino, "Caravaggio in Sicily," 211-254.

33 Edward Boid, *Travels Through Sicily and the Lipari Islands, in the Month of December, 1824* (London, 1827), 201-202.

34 Ibid., 201. I have not been able to determine why the altarpiece would not have been on view. I have found no records of any major construction or restoration during that time and I have seen no other source mention the altarpiece's absence. It cannot be taken as coincidence that Boid visited Santa Lucia al Sepolcro during Lucy's feast days. He would have been compelled by the festivities to visit the church, whereas other British travelers, visiting at different times in the year, do not mention the church or saint at all.

35 George Dennis and John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in Sicily: Including Palermo, Messina, Catania, Syracuse, Etna, and the Ruins of the Greek Temples* (London, 1864), 341-342.

36 Ibid., 341. It also describes a cenotaph and sculpture of Lucy in the crypt, which were probably added after the relics were removed.

37 For information on travel writing during the Grand Tour see Buzard, "The Grand Tour," 37-52.

38 Dennis and Murry, *A Handbook*, 341.

39 Lanza, *Guida del Viaggiatore in Sicilia*, 84. Original text: "dove è quadro di Michelangelo da Caravaggio rappresentante la morte di s. Lucia."

40 Susinno, *Le Vite*.

aqueduct. Situated between two sites from Roman antiquity, the church is placed within the same context.⁴¹ Lanza's general characterization of the city is one grounded in the antique; the mention of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro and Caravaggio's altarpiece seems rather out of place. However, the painting does pictorially represent Lucy's antique origins and highlights the connection of the church to the city's patron saint. By inserting a locally-significant site into the city's larger antique context, Lanza asserts the importance of Caravaggio's altarpiece and Santa Lucia al Sepolcro to travellers.

Enrico Mauceri acknowledges Santa Lucia al Sepolcro as the burial site of Saint Lucy in *Guida di Siracusa*. However, he only does so after informing his reader that the church holds a canvas by the "famous Caravaggio," a similar usurpation of the church's hagiographic significance to that found in Lanza's guidebook.⁴² Mauceri's description of Lucy's legend and its relationship to Santa Lucia al Sepolcro is made in the context of the antique catacombs that lie below the church. Mauceri does not therefore communicate the importance of Lucy's martyrdom to Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. Rather, he highlights the church's physical and chronological significance in Siracusa's antique past. Mauceri's mention of Caravaggio's fame is another example of the disparity between Caravaggio's reputation on the continent and his reputation in Sicily, indicating the perceived worth that the name "Caravaggio" adds to the altarpiece and Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.

The guidebooks that include the *Burial of Saint Lucy* preserve the ways in which Sicilian authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries conceptualized the painting's role in its church and city. In each case, the *Burial* augments the cultural significance of the space that it occupies. It is used to define the importance of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro, its presence justifying a visit to the church. Additionally, Caravaggio's *Burial* asserts a cultural patrimony for the city of Siracusa. Each author inserts it among other significant, and often antique, sites of interest. With each description, the *Burial of Saint Lucy* becomes an agent in the creation of identity for nineteenth-century authors attempting to assert a distinctly antique Siracusan past.

The painting had a potential for agency in these ways precisely because its site-specific production forged an inherent relationship between it and the church in which it was installed. Caravaggio's compositional decisions responded to Lucy's local hagiography and status as patron saint. The *Burial of Saint Lucy* therefore served as a crystallization of the saint's relationship to Siracusa, and was treated as such in the generations of Siracusans who witnessed the painting in the following centuries. Implicit in any conception of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* and Santa Lucia al Sepolcro is Caravaggio's enigmatic reputation. Caravaggio's fame was perpetuated in Sicily and Siracusa precisely because they were considered to be on the

periphery of the artistic world. However, the cult of personality surrounding Caravaggio clouds the importance of the addition of the *Burial of Saint Lucy* to the visual and cultural landscape of Siracusa in the seventeenth century and beyond. In this way, the *Burial of Saint Lucy* has generated yet another identity for the church at which it was displayed—the site of a celebrated work by an artistic genius. The enduring ability of the altarpiece to define the space it inhabits is the ultimate demonstration of a site-specific work taking on a life of its own.

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⁴¹ Lanza, *Guida del Viaggiatore in Sicilia*, 84.

⁴² Enrico Mauceri, *Guida di Siracusa*, 96. Mauceri inaccurately dates Caravaggio's *Burial* to 1586. However, this does not undermine the insight into early twentieth century conceptions of the church that his discussion provides.



Figure 1. Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da, 1573-1610), *Burial of Saint Lucy*, 1608-09, oil on canvas, 16 x 120 inches. Duomo, Syracuse, Italy. Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource, New York, NY.

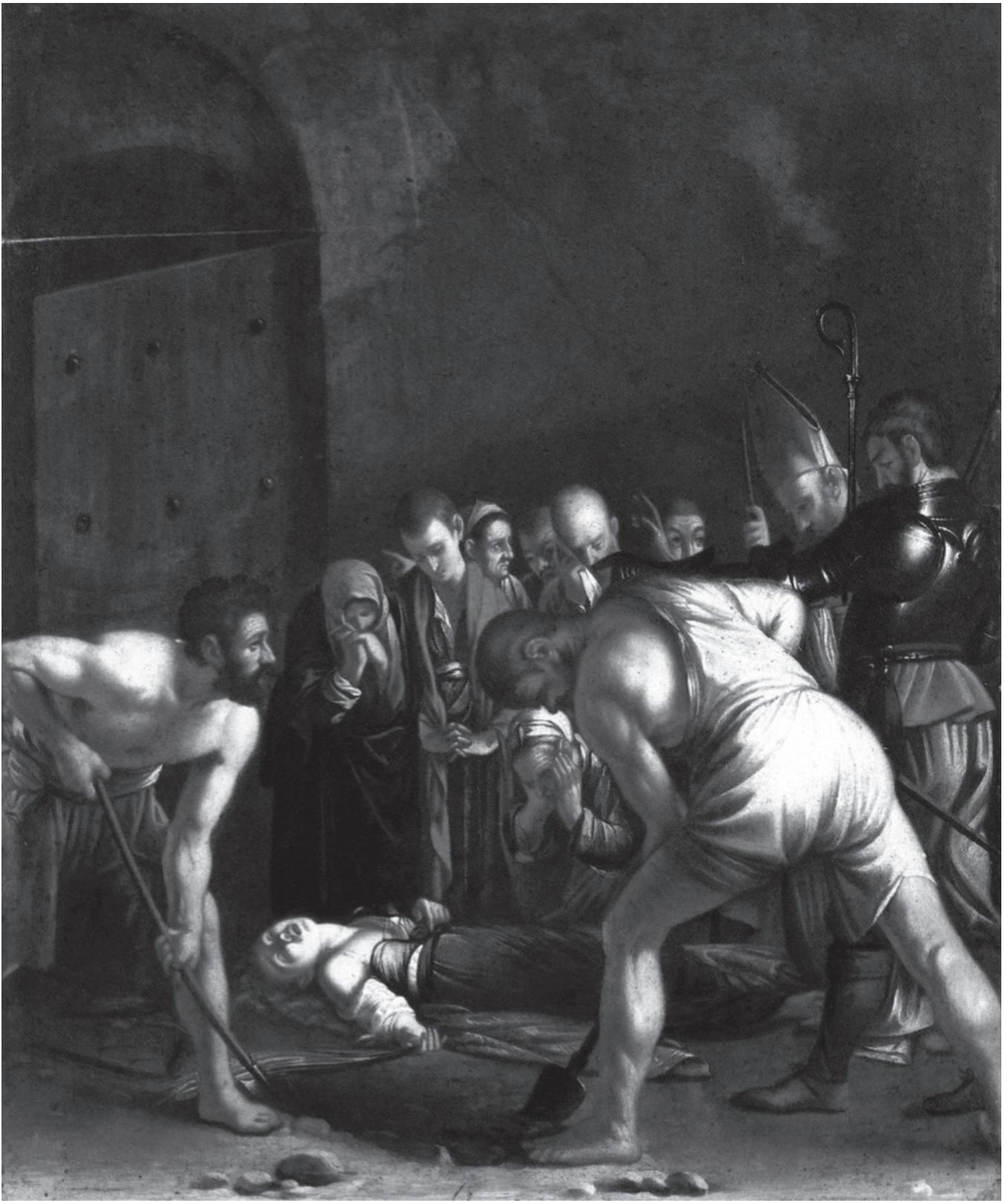


Figure 2. Mario Minniti (attributed), *Burial of Saint Lucy* after Caravaggio, before 1640, oil on copper, 16 x 13.4 inches. Rome, Private Collection. Reproduced from Maurizio Marini, *Caravaggio* (Rome: Newton Compton, 2005). Photo credit: Arte Fotografica.