Classical texts in the art treatises of early Modern Period

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Abstract. This paper discusses the quotation frequency and reference strategies of Leon Battista Alberti, Federico Borromeo, and Gabriele Paleotti. These three Catholic art theoreticians of Early Modern period engaged Classical texts as the point of reference and expertly manipulated the Classical sources to provide contextual arguments in the formation of their own artistic theories. Alberti, Borromeo, and Paleotti directly alluded or referred to Pliny the Elder, Plutarch, Xenophon, Strabo, Aulus Gellius, and other Classical sources rather extensively. This can be noticed from various quotation strategies applied in Alberti, Borromeo, and Paleotti treatises and by statistical data on quotation frequency in Alberti's *De pictura*, Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane*, and Borromeo's *De pictura sacra*.
Keywords: Leon Battista Alberti, Federico Borromeo, Gabriele Paleotti, art theory, art treatises, humanist education, early modern period.

Antikiniai tekstai Renesanso meno teorijos traktatuose

Santrauka. Straipsnyje aptariama antikinių tekstų citavimo strategija ir citavimo dažnumas Leono Battistos Alberti, Federico Borromeo ir Gabriele Paleotti meno teorijos traktatuose. Šie katalikiškojo meno teoretikai pasitelkė savitą antikinių šaltinių citavimo strategiją, siekdami savo darbams suteikti teorinį kontekstą ir pagrįsti estetinius argumentus. Alberti, Borromeo ir Paleotti gausiai citavo arba kitaip nurodė Plinijaus Vyresniojo, Plutarcho, Ksenofonto, Strabono, Aulo Gelijaus ir kitų Antikos autorių tekstus. Tai pastebima tiek apžvelgiant individualias citavimo strategijas, tiek analizuojant statistinius Alberti veikalo *De pictura,* Paleotti traktato *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* ir Borromeo darbo *De pictura sacra* citavimo dažnumo rodiklius.
Reikšminiai žodžiai: Leonas Battista Alberti, Federico Borromeo, Gabriele Paleotti, dailės teorija, dailės traktatai, humanistinis išsilavinimas, ankstyvasis modernus laikotarpis.

There is no need to discuss that the Renaissance was embedded within the ideas of Antiquity, differently from the Medieval period. The discovery of Cicero's letters by Petrarch shed new light on Antiquity. In the first half of thirteen century Guarino Veronese translated Plutarch's *Moralia*, published *Περὶ παίδων ἀγωγῆς* ("The Education of Children") and *Βίοι παράλληλοι* ("Parallel Lives"). Other Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini spent

most of his life in secluded Swiss and Swabian monastic libraries hoping to discover Classical texts and his dedication did not go to waste. Bracciolini stumbled on full text of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, Vitruvius' *De architectura*, as well as Cicero's *Pro Sexto Roscio* (Woodward 1906, 25–27). These were only a few of Classical texts that formed the base of the new Renaissance Humanist education. The importance of Antiquity for the Renaissance and later Early modern period is generally consented to, yet there are a few troublesome questions on the matter.

The humanists considered themselves as the successors of the Antiquity in the Christian context, engaging Classical texts as the point of reference. We conventionally regard the Early modern period as the reclaimer of the Classical tradition, still I argue that in most art theory treatises of the Early modern period the Classical texts were skilfully manipulated as rhetorical instruments to provide contextual arguments and to demonstrate the artistic progress in the historical perspective.

1. Alberti's approach to Antiquity

The perfect specimen revealing the epoch's approach to Antiquity as historical context could be Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* published in 1439. This art theory treatise dedicated to perspective is esteemed to be one of the most important and influential Renaissance treatises on the visual art. Giorgio Vasari even considered this tractate more celebrated than Alberti's paintings (Vasari 1998, 178–184).

An Italian humanist, artist, architect, poet, and philosopher Alberti (1404–1472) studied at the University of Padua under the supervision of rhetor Gasparino Barzizza (Vasari 1998, 179) in 1414–1421. There Alberti had a chance to study the recently published aforementioned Veronese's and Bracciolini's discoveries of Plutarch, Cicero, and Vitruvius. Presumably, Alberti got an opportunity to investigate the *compendia* of Petrarch's friend Guglielmo Pastrengo (Weiss 1969, 25; Jarzombek 1990, 275) and to acquaint himself with other Classical sources (Spencer 1957, 30). His education gave Alberti an impetus to publish *De architectura* based on Vitruvius and later, in 1435, the first edition of *De pictura* in Tuscan dialect, which was republished in Latin in 1439.

De pictura, written in three books, is the oldest surviving Renaissance treatise on visual art, clearly influenced by Classical authors. The tractate displays the historical and philosophical paradigm of Renaissance synergy between art and the Humanist education. Some researchers think that the tripartite structure of *De pictura* is based on the rhetorical structure of *exordium, narratio*, *confirmatio*, *reprehensio*, *peroratio* by Cicero (Spencer 1957, 26–30). However, for me it seems more logical to regard Alberti's tractate, as Jarzombek reasons, structurally as a Renaissance diagram that brings into textual visibility the literary and cultural practices (Jarzombek 1990, 277). This diagram would represent the three sections of a temple, the walls illustrating *ratio*, the columns standing for the scientific discourse or *natura*, and the roof corresponding to the ethics (*ethos*). Alberti himself similarly explains the structure of the treatise in the dedication to Filippo

Brunelleschi in the Italian edition of 1435[1]. To demonstrate this diagram, the first book dedicated to mathematical principles of the geometric perspective could be regarded as the manifestation of Aristotelian *ratio* (Nagel, Wood 2010, 291). Respectively, the second book presenting Renaissance artistic techniques of *circonscrizione*, *composizione*, *e ricevere di lumi* represents *natura*, and the third book describing the perfect artist and his education would correspond to *ethos*. This structure seems to be reinforced by Classical authors, which Alberti refers to not to demonstrate his education and polymathy, but to establish a reliable aesthetic criterion.

Alberti quotes or refers to Cicero's *De inventione*, *De oratore*, *Orator ad M. Brutum*, *De natura deorum*, *Brutus* and *De amicitia*[2] eight times in total. Alberti employs the same amount of references to Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and 21 citations taken from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*. References to Pliny amount to almost the third of all allusions in *De pictura* and it might be due to Pliny's popularity during the Medieval period (Healy 2004, 36–40). E.g. to explain the idea of perspective, Alberti writes about an artist Timanthes. Timanthes managed to paint satyrs so that they appeared to be very small in comparison to the sleeping Cyclops[3]. This quote works as an illustration of how playing with the proportional size of figures on the two-dimensional surface can create an illusion of perspective. Even though Pliny the Elder is not mentioned directly, Alberti is rewriting the Classical source and reusing it to reinforce his own argument about perspective. Although Pliny the Elder is the most referred to author in *De pictura*, in most of the cases he is not mentioned explicitly as other Classical authors. Alberti writes *sunt qui referant* or *dicunt nostri*[4] and names Pliny directly only once[5]. This allows to assume that most of the stories of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* were well known in Alberti's lifetime.

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[1]   *De pictura* [A Filippo Brunelleschi]: *Tu tanto persevera in trovare, quanto fai di dì in dì, cose per quali il tuo ingegno maraviglioso s'acquista perpetua fama e nome, e se in tempo t'accade ozio, mi piacerà rivegga questa mia operetta de pictura quale a tuo nome feci in lingua toscana. Vederai tre libri: el primo, tutto matematico, dalle radici entro dalla natura fa sorgere questa leggiadra e nobilissima arte. El secondo libro pone l'arte in mano allo artefice, distinguendo sue parti e tutto dimostrando. El terzo instituisce l'artefice quale e come possa e debba acquistare perfetta arte e notizia di tutta la pittura* ("I beg you to go on, as you are doing, finding means whereby your wonderful merit may obtain everlasting fame and renown, and if you should have some leisure, I shall be glad if you will look over this little work of mine, *De pictura*, which I did into Tuscan for you. You will see that there are three books. The first, which is entirely mathematical, shows how this noble and beautiful art arises from roots within Nature herself. The second puts the art into the hands of the artist, distinguishes its parts and explains them all. The third instructs the artist how he may and should attain complete mastery and understanding of the art of painting" (trans. C. Grayson; Penguin Classics)).

[2]   *De inventione* (*De pictura*, 3.56); *De oratore* (*De pictura* 3.56); *Orator ad M. Brutum* (*De pictura* 2.47); *De natura deorum* (*De pictura* 2.38); *Brutus* (*De pictura* 2.46 et 2.63.); *De amicitia* (*De pictura* 2.25 et 2.41).

[3]   *De pictura*, 1.18: *Timanthes mihi videri solet, qui pictor, ut aiunt, Cyclopem dormientem parva in tabella pingens fecit iuxta satyros pollicem dormientis amplectentes ut ea satyrorum commensuratione dormiens multo maximus videretur* ("Of all the ancients, the painter Timanthes always seems to me to have observed this force of comparison best. They say that he represented on a small panel a Cyclops asleep, and put in next to him some satyrs embracing his thumb, so that the sleeping figure appeared very large indeed in proportion to the satyrs", Cf. Plin. *Nat*. 35.74: *veluti cyclops dormiens in parvola tabella, cuius et sic magnitudinem exprimere cupiens pinxit iuxta satyros thyrso pollicem eius metientes* ("For instance, a quite small panel of a Sleeping Cyclops, whose gigantic stature he aimed at representing even on that scale by painting at his side some Satyrs measuring the size of his thumb" (trans. H. Rackham; all English translations of Classical texts are taken from the Loeb Classical Library, if not indicated otherwise)).

[4]   Plin. *Nat*. 35.15, 35.16, 35.22.

[5]   *De pictura*, 2.26: *Quando quidem non historiam picturae ut Plinius sed artem novissime recenseamus* ("Since we are not writing a history of painting like Pliny, but treating of the art in an entirely new way").

The same quotation strategy is applied at the beginning of the second book of *De pictura* where Alberti provides a discourse on the nobleness of art. Alberti retells a story from Plutarch's *Alexander*[6] where the sight of Alexander's image struck Cassander so intensely that he started to shudder and tremble. Alberti reuses the story without altering the main details, but changes some of the words to support his own argument about art's effect on human beings. Even though Plutarch writes about *great fear* (δεινὸν δέος), Alberti chooses to use the word *maiestas*, reflecting on the distinctive attribute of art to represent reality. A reference to Plutarch is also made to show the opposite effect: Plutarch writes that Agesilaus did not consent to and even forbade the making of any kind of his image due to his unimposing presence[7]. This whole discourse on the nobleness of art serves as an epitome of how Alberti reuses Antiquity for his rhetoric argumentation and provides a background to establish a reliable aesthetic criterion. Two different stories from Plutarch function as reliable examples of art's characteristic to depict likeness and to excite the viewer. Furthermore, these cases assist in settling the main advantages for Alberti's theory of perspective.

We can regard *De pictura* as an exemplary manifestation of Renaissance interdisciplinary work in which the aesthetic paradigm of Renaissance functions in close contact with ideas, style, and even syntax of Classical authors. There are 56 references in total which add up to approximately 1.3 citations per page, and quotes from Classical authors make 80.4% of all mentions. I posit that Alberti did a magnificent job connecting Classical and Humanist ideas with Renaissance artistic practice, devising a consistent aesthetic theory in which Antiquity functions as a point of historical perspective.

2. A shift in the attitude

Alberti's theory and approach to Classical texts were vastly influential in the Renaissance, but the 15th century was galloping rather than trotting progress wise. Artistic experience, techniques, and even attitude towards Antiquity went through decades of shifts up until the

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[6] *De pictura*, 2.25: *Refert Plutarchus Cassandrum unum ex Alexandri ducibus, quod simulacrum iam defuncti Alexandri intueretur, in quo regis maiestatem cognovisset, toto cum corpore trepidasse* ("Plutarch tells us that Cassandrus, one of Alexander's commanders, trembled all over at the sight of a portrait of the deceased Alexander, in which he recognised the majesty of his king"). Cf. Plut. *Alex.* 74.4: τὸ δὲ ὅλον οὕτω φασὶ δεινὸν ἐνδῦναι καὶ δευσοποιὸν ἐγγενέσθαι τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ Κασάνδρου τὸ δέος, <…> θεώμενον τοὺς ἀνδριάντας, εἰκόνος Ἀλεξάνδρου φανείσης, ἄφνω πληγέντα φρῖξαι καὶ κραδανθῆναι τὸ σῶμα καὶ μόλις ἀναλαβεῖν ἑαυτόν, ἰλιγγιάσαντα πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ("And in general, as we are told, Cassander's spirit was deeply penetrated and imbued with a dreadful fear of Alexander, <…> the sight of an image of Alexander smote him suddenly with a shuddering and trembling from which he could scarcely recover, and made his head swim" (trans. B. Perrin)).

[7] *De pictura*, 2.25: *Agesilaumque Lacenam, quod se esse admodum deformem intelligeret, suam recusasse a posteris effigiem cognosci, eaque de re neque pingi a quoquam neque fingi voluisse* ("He also tells us how Agesilaus the Lacedaemonian, realizing that he was very ugly, refused to allow his likeness to be known to posterity, and so would not be painted or modelled by anyone"). Cf. Plut. *Ages.* 2.2: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποθνήσκων ἀπεῖπε 'μήτε πλαστὰν μήτε μιμηλάν' τινα ποιήσασθαι τοῦ σώματος εἰκόνα, λέγεται δὲ μικρός τε γενέσθαι καὶ τὴν ὄψιν εὐκαταφρόνητος ("We have no likeness of him (for he himself would not consent to one, and even when he lay dying forbade the making of "either statue or picture" of his person), but he is said to have been a little man of unimposing presence" (trans. B. Perrin)).

Council of Trent's final session in 1563[8]. Two decades later, in 1582, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti published a treatise *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* outlining this aesthetic variation of visual arts in the mindset of Catholic Church. Paleotti and St Carlo Borromeo were the main executives during the last session of the Tridentine Council and formed most of the decrees regarding the Church's stand toward art and spiritual contours of Baroque (O'Malley 2013, 230–247).

Paleotti was not only one of the minds behind the Tridentine decrees, his tractate was written in a sort of collaboration with prominent academicians and artists such as Ulisse Aldrovandi, Carlo Sigonio, Federico Pendasio, Pirro Ligorio, and Giovanni Angelo Papio (Prodi 2012, 14–16). Paleotti intended to outline the main principles of visual art in the post-Tridentine Church, mainly based on the idea of Gregory the Great that pictures are *Biblia pauperum* ("The Bible for illiterate") (Barasch 1985, 64), and to form the main criteria for sacral art. Plainly speaking, Paleotti was one of the first authors to write about the main principles of Baroque art and had a strong intention to write five books about visual arts, defining the difference between sacral and profane images. However, he succeeded in finishing two books of 281 pages in their entirety and left the index for the other three.

There are 1 104 references (*sic*!) in the margins of *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* evoking Classical texts, writings of the Church Fathers, other religious, theoretical, or philosophical titles. They amount to 3.9 references per page on average, most of which (228 or 20.7%) refer to the Bible or St Thomas Aquinas (101 or 9.2%), and they make up almost one third of all the references. This insight allows us to grasp the general idea of the argumentation strategy of Paleotti. Antiquity for him functions as the discourse of historical perspective used to construct the main criteria of post-Tridentine Catholic art. There are 3.4% (37 in total) references to Pliny the Elder, 2.5% (28 in total) to Cicero, and 5.5% (61 in total) to St Augustine. Other quoted Classical authors are Plutarch, Xenophon, and Strabo.

Quotes and references form a solid matrix of sources, grounded in historical, philosophical, and theological experience of humanity. Talking about the origins of images, Paleotti skilfully alludes to Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*[9], reshaping the Classical source into a completely new Humanistic ideal. A quote from Pliny serves as an early historical example of how art can universally delineate Catholic ideas to diverse groups of human

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[8]   In the proceedings of the conference "Immagini e Arte Sacra nel Concilio di Trento. Atti del convegno per il 450° anniversario del decreto sulle immagini" in the Pontifical Gregorian University several authors discuss the genesis and reception of the Tridentine decree on sacred images. Michelina Tenace argues that the origin of this decree is rooted in the II Council of Nicaea and Paolo Prodi discusses the problems of the imagery in the Tridentine age. The conference and its proceedings unveiled the complexity of the Tridentine decree on sacred images and its interdisciplinarity.

[9]   E.g. Plin. *Nat*. 7.1 in: *Discorso,* 1.4: [p]erciò che, quando non siano gli uomini nati nel medesimo paese, né intendano il medesimo linguaggio, sono in certo modo tra di loro come mutoli, dicendo Plinio: *Tanta est loquendi varietas, ut externus alieno non sit hominis vice*. E niuno istromento è più atto ad isprimere acconciamente gli occulti concetti, che questo delle imagini e pittur[e] ("For the fact is that when men are not born in the same country and do not understand the same language, they are in a sense mute when they come into contact. As Pliny puts it, "So great is the variety of speech that to another, someone from afar is scarcely regarded as human." And there is no instrument better suited to expressing hidden concepts tidily than that of images and pictures" (trans. W. McCuaig; Getty Publications)).

beings. In further parts Paleotti sometimes even quotes Pliny directly in italics[10] or refers to him in the margins (*Discorso*, 1.5), but in the text writes *dicono gli autori* ("authors say"). The original quote (Plin. *Nat*. 35.4) has the phrase *ut reperio* ("as I find") thus it seems that Paleotti reuses Pliny's text and extends the idea. The same quoting strategy is applied when Paleotti goes on discussing the value of art in *Discorso*, 1.9. Even though, Paleotti rewrites stories from Pliny[11], Strabo[12], and Plutarch[13], there are no direct references to these authors in the text, only remarks in the margins which usually mean an indirect reference. This might be due to the fact that Paleotti had a specific audience in mind. His treatise was meant to be read by artists, parochial officials, art patrons, and art collectors of his native Bologna where Paleotti was a bishop from 1566 and an archbishop from 1582 (Prodi 2012, 13–15). Hence, *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* is not interdisciplinary as Alberti's *De pictura*, but displays Paleotti's and his circle's ideas on sacral and profane art.

The combined amount of references in Paleotti's treatise allows us to establish that the author had more Classical sources at his hand than Alberti, which Paleotti systemically applied to strengthen his arguments. Most of the references to Classical authors are found in the first part of the first book which explains the origins of images, thus it is rather clear that Paleotti views Antiquity in the light of historical perspective, besides adapting

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[10] Plin. *Nat*. 30.1 in *Discorso*, 1.6: *arte quondam nobili tunc cum expeteretur a regibus populisque, et illos nobilitante, quos esset dignata posteris* ("Image making was a noble art at one time, sought out by kings and peoples, ennobling those whom it deigned to transmit to posterity") or Plin. *Nat*. 35.7: *apud romanos quoque honos huic arti mature contingit siquidem cognomina ex ea Pictorum traxerunt Fabii clarissimae gentis princepsque eius cognominis ipse Salutis pinxit* ("In Rome also honour was fully attained by this art at an early date, inasmuch as a very distinguished clan of the Fabii derived from it their surname of Pictor. 'Painter' and the first holder of the name himself painted the Temple of the Health" (trans. H. Rackham)).

[11] *Discorso*, 1.9: *Onde tra gli altri si narra d'un famoso pittore ne' suoi tempi, che, doppo lo avere con alcune opere sue adunato grandissimo tesoro, si risolse a donare ciò che faceva, e fu giudicato prudentissimo che egli donasse le cose alle quali nessuna sorte di prezzo poteva essere uguale* ("Among these stories is one about a painter, famous in his time, who acquired a great deal of wealth from the sale of some works and thereupon decided to donate his creations, and it was judged a piece of particular sagacity for him to make a donation of things that no price could match anyway"). Cf. Plin. *Nat*. 35.9: *verum eadem illa torvitas tabulas duas Aiacis et Veneris mercata est a Cyzicenis HS [30xii]30* ("However, that same severe spirit paid the city of Cyzicus 1,200,000 sesterces for two pictures, an Ajax and an Aphrodite").

[12] *Discorso*, 1.9: *Leggendosi che alcune imagini sono state spesse volte con così smisurati prezzi comperate, che il narrarlo solo rende meraviglia* ("The accounts one reads of the extravagant purchase prices often paid for some images make one's head spin"). Cf. Strab. 14.2.19: φασὶ δὲ τοῖς Κῴοις ἀντὶ τῆς γραφῆς ἑκατὸν ταλάντων ἄφεσιν γενέσθαι τοῦ προσταχθέντος φόρου ("It is said that the Coans got a remission of one hundred talents of the appointed tribute in return for the painting" (trans. H. L. Jones)).

[13] *Discorso*, 1.9: *Leggemo parimente diversi re et imperatori grandissimi avere talmente stimato e presa la protezzione delle opere di questi eccellenti artefici, che averanno difese le città dal furore de' nemici e sacheggiamenti de' soldati solo per tema che insieme non si abbrusciasse qualche notabile opera di quest'arte, come avenne nel tempo di Demetrio re verso la città di Rodi* ("We read as well that diverse great kings and emperors so admired and protected certain works of famous artists that they were prepared to save a city, Rhodes for example in the time of King Demetrius, from being ransacked by furious enemy soldiers, just to make sure some notable painting or sculpture was not burned along with the rest"). Cf. Plut. *Demetr*. 22.2: Πεμψάντων δὲ κήρυκα τῶν Ῥοδίων καὶ δεομένων φείσασθαι καὶ μὴ διαφθεῖραι τὸ ἔργον, ἀπεκρίνατο τὰς τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνας ἂν ἐμπρῆσαι μᾶλλον ἢ τέχνης πόνον τοσοῦτον ("The Rhodians sent a herald and, begged Demetrius to spare and not destroy the work, whereupon he replied that he would rather burn the likenesses of his father than so great a labour of art" (trans. B. Perrin)).

the aesthetic criteria and rhetoric principles of Antiquity to formulate the post-Tridentine Catholic art paradigm. Even so we can also notice that Paleotti draws a clear distinction between common aesthetic principles and sacral art, separating the Classical (pagan) context from the Christian one.

3. The outburst of Baroque

Corresponding ideas on post-Tridentine Catholic art are found in the treatise *De pictura sacra* published in 1624 by Federico Borromeo, the archbishop of Milan, student of Paleotti, and cousin of St Carlo Borromeo. In 1580, Borromeo started studying in the *Collegio Borromeo* established by his cousin in the University of Pavia. There he obtained a theology diploma in 1585 and moved to Rome at the invitation of pope Sixtus V (Rivola 1656, 16–25). The following year Borromeo rose to the ranks of cardinal and in 1595 he was appointed as the archbishop of Milan by his good friend Ippolito Aldobrandini, the Pope Clemens VIII (Rivola 1656, 114–122). Coming from such a background, Borromeo was almost destined to accomplish some great things. In 1587, he started writing a treatise on aesthetic paradigm of Baroque, and in 1613 established the Milanese *Accademia del disegno* (Rivola 1656, 406) where his tractate *De pictura sacra* was used for educating future artists.

Borromeo's treatise consisting of two books provides general guidelines for distinguishing between sacral and profane instances of art, besides imparts commands for artists on how to craft artistic pieces that are in agreement with the decrees of the Council of Trent. Every theological argument in *De pictura sacra* is justified by the Church's tradition, prevailing texts, quotes from Christian philosophers, or references to the Bible. Borromeo frequently alludes to the Book of Wisdom, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and other sacred texts. There are also abundant remarks to the Church Fathers as St Basil of Caesarea, St Clement of Alexandria, St John of Damascus, St Dionysius the Areopagite, St Augustine of Hippo, as well as the Patristic writings of St Gregory of Nazianzus, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Nilus, St Irenaeus, or Eusebius of Caesarea. There are 118 references in *De pictura sacra,* and the quotes from the Christian sources add up to approximately third of all the references, the Bible being the main authority with 13.6% of references (16 in total). The next most quoted Christian source are the texts of St Augustine of Hippo with meagre 4.2% (5 in total) of quotes.

Secular ideas are generally validated by the references to Classical authors such as Aristotle, Cicero's *De officiis*, Demosthenes, Philostratus the Athenian, Callistratus, Libanius, Horace's *Ars poetica*, texts of Plato (*Republic*, *the Apology of Socrates*, and also *Epinomis*), Plutarch, and Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*. The latter is the most quoted source after the Bible with 10.1% (12 in total).

Despite the fact that in *De pictura sacra* there are 2.1 references per page on average, most of them are not annotated in the margins or declared explicitly. E.g. when Borromeo develops unfolds his argument regarding depictions of nudity, he alludes to Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* without indicating the source, which also serves as a historical argument to

validate the source of European aesthetic tradition with Roman artistic practice[14]. In other parts we can find direct indications of the Classical authors but not a complete reference. As I find these cases the most relevant to my argument, we will examine a few quotes in *De pictura sacra* and how they explicate Borromeo's arguments.

Talking about the origins and philosophical assumptions of art, Borromeo cites Pliny the Elder who himself quotes Varro arguing where the Latin word *caelum* for sky comes from[15]. Even though Borromeo could directly allude to Varro, he chooses Pliny as the primary and authoritative source mainly due to the popularity of *Naturalis Historia* in the Humanist education. Similarly, Borromeo chooses to quote Callistratus to back up his argument on the difficulty of conveying emotions in art[16]. The story about the statue of Satyr from Callistratus' *Ekphraseis* ("Descriptions") functions as an example of why correctly exuding emotions is important for all sorts of visual art. Borromeo chooses this source mainly to premise his argument, in addition to demonstrating his knowledge on the issue by quoting various Classical authors. As in the argument on the errors of the ancient pagans, Borromeo reasons by telling the story of Cleopatra who, according to Plutarch, died from a venomous snake's bite to her arm and not the chest as it is sometimes incorrectly believed[17]. Plutarch's quote serves as an authoritative source for Borromeo's argument.

Another interesting exploitation of Classical sources occurs at the very end of the first book of *De pictura sacra* where we can find a direct quote from *Naturalis Historia*. In

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[14] *De pictura sacra*, 1.6.2: *Neque novum erit hoc tegi velarique corpora; siquidem etiam Romanorum pictura vetus id ipsum instituit, tamquam abominata Graecorum morem, quibus nuditas placuit* ("Now there is nothing innovative about covering and cloaking bodies; indeed, it was already being practiced by ancient Roman painters, who abhorred the way the Greeks enjoyed nudity" (trans. K. S. Rothwell, Jr.; The I Tatti Renaissance Library). Cf. Plin. *Nat*. 34.10: *Togatae effigies antiquitus ita dicabantur. Placuere et nudae tenentes hastam ab epheborum e gymnasiis exemplaribus; quas Achilleas vocant. Graeca res nihil velare, at contra Romana ac militaris thoraces addere* ("In old days the statues dedicated were simply clad in the toga. Also naked figures holding spears, made from models of Greek young men from the gynnasiums – what are called figures of Achilles – became popular. The Greek practice is to leave the figure entirely nude, whereas Roman and military statuary adds a breastplate" (trans. H. Rackham)).

[15] *De pictura sacra*, 1.2.3: *Simile quidam scriptum reliquit Plinius et eo fortasse spectabant illius verba, cum innixus etiam auctoritati Varronis diceret, Caelum quasi caelatum appellari* ("Pliny, echoing the Plato but also influenced by Varro, said something similar: the Latin word for "heaven" was *caelum* because it had been "carved" (*caelatum*)"). Cf. Plin. *Nat*. 2.3: *Caelum quidem haut dubie caelati argumento diximus, ut interpretatur M. Varro* ("As for our word *caelum*, it undoubtedly has the signification 'engraved,' as is explained by Marcus Varro" (trans. H. Rackham)).

[16] *De pictura sacra*, 1.10.2: *Tanta circa animi affectus cura veteribus fuit, ut Callistratus ille, quem antea Picturae Magistrum nominavi, in describenda Satyri uniud figura sic scribat <...>* ("The profound concern that the ancients had for the emotions is illustrated by the figure of a Satyr described by Callistratus, the teacher of painting whom I mentioned earlier"). Cf. Callistratus *Ekphraseis* 1.

[17] *De pictura sacra*, 1.3.1: *Neque Cleopatra mammae morsu periit, sicuti picta fuerat, sed brachio potius anguem admovit, ut moreretur. Ita enim est apud Plutarchum* ("Nor did Cleopatra die from a snakebite in her breast, as had been painted. Instead, says Plutarch, she died after she set the snake on her arm"). Cf. Plut. *Ant*. 86.1: λέγεται δὲ τὴν ἀσπίδα κομισθῆναι σὺν τοῖς σύκοις ἐκείνοις καὶ τοῖς θρίοις ἄνωθεν ἐπικαλυφθεῖσαν, οὕτω γὰρ τὴν Κλεοπάτραν κελεῦσαι, μηδὲ αὐτῆς ἐπισταμένης τῷ σώματι προσπεσεῖν τὸ θηρίον· ὡς δὲ ἀφαιροῦσα τῶν σύκων εἶδεν, εἰπεῖν· 'ἐνταῦθα ἦν ἄρα τοῦτο·' καὶ τὸν βραχίονα παρασχεῖν τῷ δήγματι γυμνώσασαν ("It is said that the asp was brought with those figs and leaves and lay hidden beneath them, for thus Cleopatra had given orders, that the reptile might fasten itself upon her body without her being aware of it. But when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said: 'There it is, you see,' and baring her arm she held it out for the bite" (trans. B. Perrin)).

this excerpt Pliny writes about how emperor Tiberius fell in love with the *Apoxyomenos*[18]. The narrative functions as an allegorical illustration of the disparity between the sacral and the profane art, i.e. even articles of antique art are worth saving if they provide any kind of delight. Yet they serve only as decorations.

In another chapter Borromeo retells the story of Agesilaus which we already encountered in the text of previously examined Paleotti, yet, instead of Plutarch's record, Borromeo chooses Xenophon's version[19]. This story furthers the theological arguments based on ideas of the Church Fathers and the Bible on how art has an ability to represent and to have both positive and negative emotional impact. The reasoning is completed with an actual story from Borromeo's lifetime about an artist Giovanni Baglione who opted to paint the devil with facial features of his competitor and foe Caravaggio. Hence *De pictura sacra's* quoting strategy communicates Borromeo's attitude towards what should be regarded as proper sacral art by reusing Classical authors to justify theological arguments.

Borromeo, similarly to Alberti and Paleotti, frequently cites or refers to Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* to establish the system of justified aesthetic criteria. Unlike his precursors, Borromeo also uses Classical writings as a point of reference for his anti-Mannerism polemics. Borromeo criticises Mannerism for deviating from mimetic representation of art, being too excessive in depicting human figures, and for merging the sacral and the profane. The Classical examples allow Borromeo to evoke the long-standing aesthetic tradition as the source and the reference for art.

4. Concluding remarks

It is quite clear that Alberti, Paleotti, and Borromeo had easy access to already rediscovered Classical authors. Moreover, Renaissance artists and scholars considered themselves to be the successors of the Roman tradition and it is not surprising that the aforementioned authors of Early modern period quoted mainly Latin sources as the point of reference.

Alberti, Paleotti, and Borromeo reused Classical sources in most cases alluding to them or rewriting them as a part of their rhetoric strategy by establishing the aesthetic principles to assess the Renaissance art in relation to Baroque artistry, in the case of Alberti, or in the historical perspective in the case of Paleotti and Borromeo.

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[18] Plin. *Nat*. 34.26 in: *De pictura sacra*, 1.13.5: *Id quod Plinii locus declarat <...>: Plurima ex omnibus signa fecit, ut diximus, fecundissimae artis, inter, quae destringentem se, quem M Agrippa ante thermas suas dicavit, mire gratum Tiberio principi. Non quivit temperare sibi in eo, quamquam imperiosus sui inter initia principatus, transtulitque in cubiculum alio signo substituto, cum quidem tanta pop. R. contumacia fuit, ut theatri clamoribus reponi Apoxyomenon flagitaverit princepsque, quamquam adamatum, reposuerit* ("Lysippus as we have said was a most prolific artist and made more statues than any other sculptor, among them the Man using a Body-scraper which Marcus Agrippa gave to be set up in front of his Warm Baths and of which the emperor Tiberius was remarkably fond. Tiberius, although at the beginning of his principate he kept some control of himself, in this case could not resist the temptation, and had the statue removed to his bedchamber, putting another one in its place at the baths; but the public were so obstinately opposed to this that they raised an outcry at the theatre, shouting "Give us back the 'Apoxyomenos'" – Man using a Body-scraper – and the Emperor, although he had fallen quite in love with the statue, had to restore it").

[19] *De pictura sacra*, 2.8.6: *Ideo Xenophon Agesilao laudem quoque tribuit hanc, quod effingi sese noluerit* ("Xenophon praised Agesilaus for precisely this reason: Agesilaus did not want to have his portrait painted"). Cf. Xen. *Ages*. 11.7: καὶ τοῦ μὲν σώματος εἰκόνα στήσασθαι ἀπέσχετο, πολλῶν αὐτῷ τοῦτο δωρεῖσθαι θελόντων ("He would not allow a statue of himself to be set, though many wanted to give him one" (trans. E. C. Marchant)).

Alberti alludes to Antiquity (80.3% of all references) as his main source due to the importance of Classical ideas in the Renaissance paradigm. Borromeo reuses Classical ideas (⅕ of all references) in order to indicate the failures of Mannerism and to demonstrate the aesthetic shift which occurs during the Baroque period.

Paleotti has the highest quotation frequency of all three analysed authors, but Alberti refers to Classical sources most often (80.3% of all references) Alberti in *De pictura*, Paleotti in *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* and Borromeo in *De pictura sacra* quote Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* when arguing about the origins of art. They also allude to Plutarch, Xenophon, Strabo, Aulus Gellius, as well as other Classical authors to establish the basis for their arguments.

There is a substantial amount of references to various texts of Cicero and Quintilian as Alberti, Paleotti, and Borromeo esteemed the communicative function of art. Alberti grasped the symbolic role of the geometrical perspective and Paleotti with Borromeo perceived the didactic role of art for illiterates due to the eschatological function of sacral paintings.

Most of the Classical sources are referred to in the theoretical parts of aforementioned art treatises. In the further parts of their tractates Paleotti and Borromeo convey theological arguments and refer to Christian sources which amount to almost one third of all references in both cases. All three of these authors intentionally employed Antiquity to construct their individual artistic theory, applying similar reference strategies and quoting similar or the same Classical texts. Even though almost two centuries separate Alberti's treatise in which he explored the perspective in painting and Borromeo's tractate on the content and role of sacral art in the Catholic church, we can perceive incontrovertible authority of Antiquity in the aesthetic mindset of the Early Modern period.

Quotation Frequency

The table provides the data on the main sources in art treatises by Alberti, Paleotti, and Borromeo classified into three categories: rhetors of Antiquity (1), historiographers (2), the Scripture and Christian sources (3). I listed only those authors who are quoted or referred to by at least two authors.

	Alberti 43 pages		Paleotti 281 pages		Borromeo 56 pages	
References in total	56		1 104		118	
References per page	1.3		3.9		2.1	
1.1. Cicero	8	14.3%	28	2.5%	2	1.6%
1.2. Quintilian	8	14.3%	9	0.8%		
2.1. Pliny the Elder	21	37.5%	37	3.4%	12	10.1%
2.2. Plutarch	4	7.1%	12	1.1%	1	0.8%
2.3. Strabo	1	1.8%	2	0.2%		
2.4. Xenophon	1	1.8%	1	0.1%	1	0.8%
2.5. Aulus Gellius	2	3.6%	1	0.1%	1	0.8%
3.1. The Bible			228	20.7%	16	13.6%
3.2. St Thomas Aquinas			101	9.2%	1	0.8%
3.3. St Augustine			61	5.5%	5	4.2%

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