The Role of Prints in the Artistic Genealogy of Bernini’s Anima beata and Anima damnata

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The two marble busts by Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) known as the Blessed Soul (Anima Beata or Salvata) and the Damned Soul (Anima Damnata) are today in the Spanish Embassy to the Holy See in Rome (figs. 102 and 103). They feature prominently in all monographs on the artist. In addition, they are discussed in books and articles dealing with images related to the so-called Quattuor Novissima (Four Last Things).

The genre of written meditations on the Quattuor Novissima – Death, the Last Judgment, Hell, Heaven/Paradise or, in a later grouping, Death, Purgatory, Hell, Heaven/Paradise – was inaugurated in the early fifteenth century by Gerard van Vlierdenhoven’s Cordiale de quattuor novissimis, although Purgatory was still missing in his text. In the sixteenth century – or, more precisely, during the years of the Counter-Reformation – the idea of contemplating one’s death and the judgement of all souls as an incentive to avoid sin (Memo- rare novissima et in eternum non peccabis) found considerable resonance in the rigorous new institutions of the Catholic Church, and was especially popular with Jesuit authors such as Ignatius and Petrus Canisius. There was a constant production of artistic representations of the Quattuor Novissima from the late fifteenth century including, among others, works by Hieronymus Bosch, Maerten van Heemskerck and Hendrick Goltzius.

Most art historians identify the patron of Bernini’s Blessed Soul and Damned Soul as the Spanish cleric Pedro de Foix Montoya (1556–1630), in whose possession, according to Irving Lavin, the two works might have been as early as 1619 when ‘dos medios cuerpos de piedra de statuas’ (two half-length [!] bodies of stone, sculptures) were listed among his belongings. In 1632 the busts were placed in the sacristy of S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli and have belonged to Spanish institutions in Rome ever since. However, only in the 1970s were Bernini’s two sculptures explicitly connected with the iconography of the Quattuor Novissima. Since then, scholars such as Lavin and, more recently, Christine Gottler have drawn attention to the influence on the sculptor of certain engraved Quattuor Novissima series. Notably, a set engraved by Alexander Mair (published in Augsburg, dated 1605, figs. 104–107), and another, probably earlier one with the ‘excuditi’ of Raphael Sadeler (1560–1628/32) (published in Munich, undated, figs. 108–111). Unlike previous

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7. Lavin, op. cit., passim.

8. For Mair’s prints see Hollstein German, XVIII, compiled by R. Jijlma, Amsterdam, 1979, pp. 147–49, nos. 82–87; Lavin, figs. 26–31; Gottler, op. cit., p. 214. Sadeler’s prints measure 172 x 115 mm each [plate]; see The Illustrated Bartsch, vol. 71.2, Supplement (Raphael Sadeler I excuditi), nos. 066–069, pp. 222–27 (repositories mentioned: Berlin and Munich, wrongly classified as ‘after engravings by Egbert van Panderen’ – van Paderen’s prints, in fact, are copies after Sadeler’s). Death in Sadeler’s set carries the inscription ‘Monaci’, indicating that the prints were made in Munich either during Sadeler’s years as court engraver to Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria 1593–97, or, more probably, after his return from Venice to Bavaria in 1601–04, when he was producing illustrations for several Jesuit publications. Gottler, op. cit., p. 158, attributes the prints to Sadeler’s second stay in Munich.
The role of prints in the artistic genealogy of Bernini’s Anima Beata and Anima Damnata

Quattuor Novissima series, in which the Last Judgement, Heaven and Hell were depicted as large panoramas filled with many figures, these two series reduce each Novissimum to the image of a single head or bust in an oval frame: a skull (or, rather, a bust-length skeleton) represents Death; a crying but slightly hopeful figure represents Purgatory; a desperate figure stands for the inhabitants of Hell; and a joyful figure for those of Heaven. The Mair series has an additional subject: the dangers to the soul at the moment of death. The innovative ‘zooming in’ on just one exemplary Soul in both sets can best be explained by the pedagogy of the Re-
103. Gianlorenzo Bernini, Anima damnata, 1619, marble, 415 x 290 x 240 mm (Rome, Spanish Embassy to the Holy See. Image Roberto Sigismondi).

forma, which tried to enhance the personal appeal of religious messages.9 Hardly by chance, the chest of the ‘Blessed Soul’ in both the Sadeler and Mair series is decorated with the ‘IHS’ christogram of the Jesuits to exemplify the fate of the Damned in Hell and thus to intensify the emotional appeal of the images.

9. Already in the 1560s and 70s, Netherlandish painters such as Frans Floris moved single large figures into the foreground of their pictures, whose expressions of fear or grief were expected


The verse inscriptions of the Sadeler prints carry no author’s name, but are now unanimously attributed to the Jesuit Jakob Bidermann (1578–1639) who, in an edition of his Epigrammata (Dillingen, 1620), named himself as their author.10

According to the previous research mentioned above, Bernini, when preparing his two marble busts, either adapted the Sadeler/Mair prints for his personal use or, alternatively, was influenced by a fellow artist, Bernardino Azzolino (1572–1645), working in his own plastic medium. Azzolino and his workshop are known to have produced several sets of three or four busts in coloured wax representing the Novissima (fig. 112), the first apparently in 1610.11 One may question whether either of these two scenarios is historically correct.

While there can be little doubt that both the Sadeler/Mair prints and the Azzolino wax heads have their places in the artistic genealogy of Bernini’s two Souls, it is suggested here that art history has not yet offered a precise understanding of how printed and Sadeler prints. Even though these poems did not carry their author’s name, they have never ceased to be mine in legal terms). 11. See the ‘Checklist of preserved and recorded examples of the Four Last Things in the wax version by Giovanni Bernardino Azzolii’ in Lavin, op. cit., pp. 730–42. Azzolino had been a member of the Roman art academy since 1618.
sculpted *Quattuor Novissima* images might have shaped the appearance of the two marble busts. It is enough to mention that we ignore Bernini’s reason for recasting the previously canonical number of four *Novissima* figures – or, rather, three figures and a bust-length skeleton – as represented in Sadeler’s engravings and Azzolino’s wax cycles, into a pair of just two busts. It is also surprising that, as was suggested by previous researchers, Bernini should have chosen as his models German prints produced in Augsburg and Munich, not least because these engravings represented the then (c. 1620) slightly old-fashioned mannerist court style of Emperor Rudolph II, whereas the arts in Rome were already moving towards the High Baroque. On the other hand, Bernini’s possible alternative models, the wax heads, are far from being close imitations of the prints produced by Sadeler or Mair. One doubts that a technically skilled but somewhat uninventive artist such as Azzolino would have been able to devise such independent compositions, but so far no other sources for his wax heads have been suggested. Are we lacking a piece of the puzzle?

An answer to this question is suggested by a closer look at the production of the Roman printmaking scene in the early seventeenth century, a scene that – on account of the many foreign engravers and publishers active *in urbe* at that date – was among the most complex of the Early Modern period in Italy.12 The missing link, in our case, is a set of prints depicting the Souls by Pieter de Jode the Elder (1573–1634), produced...
in Rome in the annum Iubilei of 1600 (figs. 113-115).
De Jode’s Souls are unknown to art history.¹³ The set apparently consists of only three prints: individual busts of a soul in Purgatory, Hell and Heaven. A fourth image of a skull or bust-length skeleton, symbolizing Death, cannot be found.¹⁴ Unlike Sadeler or Mair, there are no oval frames or other ornaments; all three Souls are represented directly in the middle of their No-

¹². Attributed to Bernardino Azzolino, Wax Bust Representing a Blessed Soul, coloured wax on painted glass in deep stained and gilt box frame, 255 x 221 x 60 mm (London, Victoria & Albert Museum).
¹⁴. Marjolein Leesberg has kindly informed me that Pieter de Jode the Younger, unlike his father, published two printed representations of ‘Death’, both copies after a print in the van Panderen set [which, in turn, copy Sadeler’s prints]. One copy carries exactly the same inscriptions and is used as tailpiece of the portrait series Theatrum principum ... of 1651 (and later editions); the other bears inscriptions in Dutch and French. De Jode the Younger does not appear to have copied the other three Souls.
vissima settings. As far as the chronological sequence of the sets by Mair, Sadeler and de Jode is concerned, a comparison of the ‘Blessed Soul’ (figs. 107, 111, 115) by all three artists is quite revealing. While Mair’s Soul is represented in an oval frame that is closely related to, and probably derived from, Sadeler’s print, the frontal rather than oblique positioning of this Soul’s bust points to de Jode’s composition as the model. In Sadeler’s print, moreover, Christ is merely a face in the upper section of the oval frame, while de Jode – like Mair – has represented Him with outstretched arms. There can be little doubt about the fact that Mair’s Blessed Soul is a synthesis of the ‘Blessed Souls’ in the de Jode and Sadeler sets. Mair shows a much closer dependence on de Jode than Sadeler, for example fig. 105 makes use of the two devil heads, relocating them in the new oval format. In the Sadeler (fig. 109) those two heads become less recognizable, thus Mair cannot be copying Sadeler in this detail.

As the legends in the lower border of the de Jode prints tell, the Flemish artist produced his three engravings while working in Rome around 1600. This date accords with a cultural event in Rome mentioned by Lavin as a possible influence on Bernini’s Blessed Soul and Damned Soul: in 1600, Emilio de’ Cavalieri’s musical drama Rappresentazione dell’anima e del corpo was presented in the Oratorio dell’Assunzione of Santa Maria in Vallicella. The play is known as an important step in the development of the Italian opera. During the play’s third and last act, the spectators were presented with stage decorations alternating between Heaven and Hell and listened to songs of joy and desperation accordingly. As is stressed in a witness report dated 1602, the Rappresentazione dell’anima e del corpo was enormously popular in Rome on account of its suggestive scenography and touching musical arrangements. It is quite

probable that Pieter de Jode, who is known to have produced prints after his own designs in addition to working as a reproductive engraver, was inspired by de' Cavalieri’s play to create his three *Souls*.

The de Jode prints were made in the service of the print publisher Giulio Franceschini, whose business address was ‘all’arco di Camigliano’ (today the Via di Pie’ di Marmo). One of the few significant facts known about Franceschini is that he not only hired foreign engravers passing through Rome for contract work, but also stayed in contact with them after their return to their home countries, thus trying to achieve international sale of his products. According to Michael Bury, once back at home foreign artists were allowed to engrave and sell compositions devised or ‘owned’ by Franceschini who received a percentage of the profit, but they had to refrain from selling such ‘authorized copies’ in Rome. According to archival documents pertaining to a juridical litigation with a competitor, Franceschini gave the design of a *Crucifixion* – perhaps a proof impression – to the Flemish engraver Carel de Mallery (1571–1645), when the latter was preparing to return home after having worked in Rome c. 1596/97. Having settled down in Antwerp, de Mallery engraved this composition and sold the prints. But when Franceschini found impressions in the shop of his competitor Nicolaus van Aelst of the *Crucifixion* that were engraved by de Mallery in Rome, he regarded their sale as a violation of the papal privilege he had received on the print or, perhaps more accurately, on this print’s composition. It follows that the ‘franchise system’ devised by Franceschini was supposed to function in cooperation with commercial allies in distant areas, but that the publisher claimed a monopoly in his own business zone, Rome.

De Mallery produced a set of copies in reverse and with simplified inscriptions of the three *Souls* originally engraved by de Jode and published by Franceschini (figs. 116–118). As these copies carry the name of de Mallery’s business associate Jean le Clerc IV (c. 1550–1621/22) and the privilege of the King of France, they must have been made after the engraver’s transfer to Paris, which took place around the turn of the century. De Mallery published his copies of devotional prints in Paris in order to avoid the restrictions of privileges valid in Antwerp. In light of the archival documents mentioned above, it is not impossible that de Mallery’s Paris-based activities as a copyist were still related to a business understanding with Franceschini.

De Mallery’s and other copies or paraphrases demonstrate that de Jode’s *Souls* had a considerable success all over Europe. Among their admirers were members of the Societas Iesu, who recognized the didactic possibilities of such imagery which, ironically, was

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vented by the Oratorians rather than by the Jesuits, and they adapted the set for their own visual propaganda. However, the 'Blessed Soul', who in de Jode's image is almost certainly represented as a woman and without the IHS tag, was changed into a kind of angelic deacon not unlike the youthful militant angels and archangels depicted in paintings, sculptures and prints commissioned by the Bavarian Jesuits around 1600.\(^2\) Therefore, Christine Göttler's claim that 'Bernini was the first to represent the Anima Salvata as a woman' appears to be mistaken.\(^2\) In the light of this new discovery, moreover, one should also reconsider Preimesberger's suggestion that Bernini's marble head is a self-portrait of the artist, because the Damned Soul bears such a striking similarity to de Jode's Damned Soul as to question Bernini's need for searching additional models, even in his own mirror.\(^2\) Moreover, it can now be stated convincingly that de Jode's engravings – or de Mallery's copies – rather than the prints by Mair or Sadeler, served as models for the majority of Quattro Novissima produced in media other than printmaking in the seventeenth century, including, for example, the paintings by Francisco Ribalta today in the Museo del Prado (fig. 119) and – most importantly – the wax busts by Azzolino and his workshop.\(^2\) Bernini, in any case, appears to have been well informed about his era's major trends in 'soul representation'. Indeed, it is quite possible that he not only knew de Jode's prints but Sadeler's set as well, and thus adopted an eclectic approach: the turn of the head of Bernini's Blessed Soul is much closer to Sadeler's Blessed Soul than to that of de Jode's or Mair's.

Given this article's focus on Bernini, tracing further


\(^{21.}\) Göttler, op. cit., p. 263.


\(^{23.}\) For the Ribalta paintings see Lavin, op. cit., figs. 64 and 65.

24. Compare, for example, prints from two sets of copies by Thomas de Leu (active in Paris 1575–1612) in the Albertina album (Klebebund) HB 137, p. 118, nos. 126, 128–30, pointed out to me by Vanessa Selbach, and a single-leaf print containing all three images combined with a skull by Balthasar Moncornet (c. 1600–68) in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, inscribed ‘A Paris chez B. Moncornet rue S. Jacques vis a vis S. Yves à la belle Croix’, print pointed out to me by Philippe Rouillard.


26. Gift of Belinda L. Randall from the collection of John Witt Randall, R7715; my thanks to Tara Cerretani for measuring the print. Marjolein Leesberg has drawn my attention to yet another state of de Mallery’s print carrying the name of the publisher theodoor Galle (in the Museum Catharinseconvent, Utrecht); it must have been produced between the Mallery and the Johannes Galle states. The Utrecht print is incorrectly filed as ‘philips de Mallery’ in the museum’s database.

27. Lavin, op. cit., p. 682.
just attempt to create a visual digest by reducing the *Quattuor Novissima* to their extremes of 'Heaven' and 'Hell'? While there may indeed be larger theological or philosophical meanings underlying the dualism of Bernini's 'Souls', it is probably enough to assume that de Mallery's juxtaposition of the two busts in one print was inspired by popular allegoric confrontations of Virtue and Vice and that Bernini – or his Spanish patron – used de Mallery's composition as a starting point for the two sculptures.

It is remarkable that in the chronological sequence of engraved 'Novissima-Soul' sets the richly ornamented, gem-like prints with erudite inscriptions published by Sadeler and Mair did not have precedence. On the contrary, the 'Soul' fashion in seventeenth-century printmaking began with less decorated prints furnished with rather unrefined inscriptions in the lower borders. De Jode's prints, however, carry a much greater emotional appeal than those by Sadeler and Mair, thus pointing to their maker's familiarity with current artistic tendencies in Rome. The horror expressed by his 'Damned Soul' in the Inferno, for example, does not by chance recall the faces in agony painted by Caravaggio, especially the Medusa, Isaac and Holofernes. Therefore, the most important lesson from tracing the genealogy of Bernini's *Blessed Soul* and *Damned Soul* may well be the fact that both Azzolino and Bernini, while working in Rome, could rely on engraved models made there rather than anywhere else – models by a Netherlandish artist working in urbe!