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Article abstract

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Images of Authority, Identity, Power: Facade Mosaic Decoration in Rome during the Later Middle Ages

Catherine Harding, University of Victoria

Résumé

Cet article se propose d'examiner de vastes programmes en mosaïque décorant les entrées principales d'un certain nombre d'édifices religieux de Rome, vers la fin du Moyen Âge. Ces mosaïques ont presque toutes disparu, mais on peut reconstituer l'aspect général de leur apparence initiale en utilisant d'anciens dessins et des sources textuelles variées. De plus, on pense que ces cycles narratifs en façade ou près de celle-ci permettaient aux particuliers et aux communautés de comprendre les multiples niveaux de signification de la vie ici-bas et dans l'au-delà, comme autant d'opérateurs de pratiques sociales, culturelles, religieuses et politiques, à l'intérieur d'un environnement physique particulier : celui du tissu urbain de Rome. En outre, dans ces divers milieux qui produisaient et consommaient ces types de décor en façade, des conceptions de l'autorité, de l'identité et du pouvoir voyaient le jour.

In an earlier study, I examined the complex motives that prompted Pope Gregory IX to commission a mosaic to decorate the facade of San Pietro in Vaticano.[1] This essay provides a broader perspective for the Vatican project by examining the type of imagery displayed on the facades of important ecclesiastical sites in Rome during the later Middle Ages. In addition to the Vatican mosaic, the list of buildings that displayed large-scale facade mosaics during this period is impressive: Santa Maria Nova, San Tommaso in Formis, Santa Maria in Trastevere, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Giovanni in Laterano, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, the retrofacade of Santa Maria in Turris at the Vatican,[2] and San Paolo fuori le Mura.

Most of these mosaics have been lost long ago, although their original aspect may be reconstructed along general lines. In surveying these lost works as a group we are able to examine the various ways that these facades, with their reliance on images of authority, helped individuals and communities negotiate multiple meanings about the present and the hereafter, as operations of specific discursive practices (social, cultural, religious, political) within a particular physical environment. As we shall see, notions of authority, identity and power in the community often came into play in the production and reception of this type of facade decoration.

For the purposes of this study, I have decided to focus firstly on the different motives of the patrons commissioning the works (when their identity is known for certain), so that we might discern several key patterns regarding the intended meaning(s) of each composition. Many of the commissions are rooted in the special circumstances of a particular pope's reign, yet we may also see a more general pattern in thirteenth-century papal patronage, that of restoration and renewal, in the repeated invocation of certain types of narrative imagery on these facades. Several of the mosaic projects discussed below have been linked with self-fashioning strategies on the part of a particular patron.

A second and related point, not previously noted in the literature in relation to these monuments as a whole, is that these decorative programmes would have been used by the religious communities living and working in these churches, such as the Franciscans at Santa Maria in Aracoeli, or the monks at San Paolo fuori le Mura, to help establish a specific identity within the city of Rome. These facade compositions helped to remind onlookers about the ongoing life of the divine, both within the city and, of course, throughout the universe at large. In the examples discussed here, we are reminded of how secular/religious categories were closely elided in the Middle Ages, especially when we consider details of the liturgical ceremonies (parts of which had civic overtones) that form part of the history of these images. Much more attention could be devoted to a discussion of the different types of audiences and possible meanings of each of these mosaics, but this topic awaits fuller investigation at a future date.[3]

Sauerländer's recent analysis of Romanesque portal sculpture as "posters in stone" may be usefully applied to Italian facade mosaic programmes, beginning with the exterior decoration of the entrance portal to the monastery of San Tommaso in Formis in Rome.[4] One of Rome's great holy men, John of Matha, worked to free the bodies and souls of Christian slaves in Moslem captivity until his death in December 1213. As a young man living in Marseilles, John experienced a vision in which the Lord appeared holding one Christian and one Moslem slave by the hands. He interpreted this as a sign indicating that his life's work should be devoted to the redemption of slaves. Subsequently, he founded the Trinitarian order, and he was persuaded by Pope Innocent III to move to Rome.[5] His vision is given dramatic representation in the mosaic roundel above the main portal leading into the atrium of the monastery of San Tommaso, home of the Trinitarians in Rome (fig. 1).[6] The mosaic at San Tommaso provides a vivid example of a medieval image which worked to establish a sense of identity for its community, simultaneously acting as a miraculous sign of divine will and advertising the work of the order to the individual in the street.

As the study by Cipollone indicates, the mosaic at San

Figure I. Christ Enthroned between two slaves. San Tommaso in Formis, Rome, ca. 1210–30 (Photo: author).

Tommaso in Formis conveys vital information about the character and work of the Trinitarians.[7] The strongly emblematic character of the mosaic, with its enthroned figure of Christ grasping the arms of two slaves in chains, makes this a memorable and easily comprehensible image representing the miraculous vision of John of Matha. It also indicates the order's work of redemption for those in captivity. The *titulus* placed around the mosaic reads: "THE SIGN [OR SEAL] OF THE ORDER OF THE HOLY TRINITY AND OF CAPTIVES".[8] The sign of the Trinitarians, a red and blue cross, appears in the cross held by the captive on Christ's right. The mosaic would have made a fitting companion to frescoes that were once displayed on the facade of the church at San Tommaso: these depicted the work of the Trinitarian brethren. It is not known when the latter were commissioned, but they were destroyed in 1526.[9] The mosaic roundel is datable to the first two decades of the thirteenth century; it has been linked with the interests of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), who gave his approval to the order on 17 November 1198.[10] Both the mosaic and the frescoes would have helped promote knowledge of the order and its mission to redeem slaves, as well as attest to the ongoing presence of the life of the divine within the walls of Rome.

The example of San Tommaso raises immediate questions about our understanding of liminal experience and the importance of cult topography for believers during this period. What did it mean to cross the threshold into consecrated, holy space in a particular building, and how did exterior images and their audiences participate in the "economy of the sacred" in the different churches of Rome? Ortalli's study of Italian images of criminals and other infamous citizens during the later medieval period highlights the importance of understanding display conditions at significant locations within the urban fabric.[11] From a different perspective, but of equal importance, is Wolf's and Belting's work on the icon in the civic life of Rome. Both authors have traced the history of icons as "agents of religious experience" within the cult topography of Rome, such that we may now ask similar questions about the impact of location on the reception of these mosaics.[12]

The idea of liminality is not new to the late medieval period. From the earliest moments in the Christian church, the people responsible for building a church – patrons, architectural designers, master masons and/or mosaicists – paid special attention to the entrance, for it marked a *caesura* between the profane world and the sacred area within the church.[13] If a church possessed an atrium (as at Old Saint Peter's and San Paolo fuori le Mura), this area became a kind of monumental vestibule both to the sacred complex and to the religious experience. Even in those churches which did not possess an atrium, the concept of "passage" between profane and sacred spaces shaped decisions about materials, layout and the content of the decoration. As
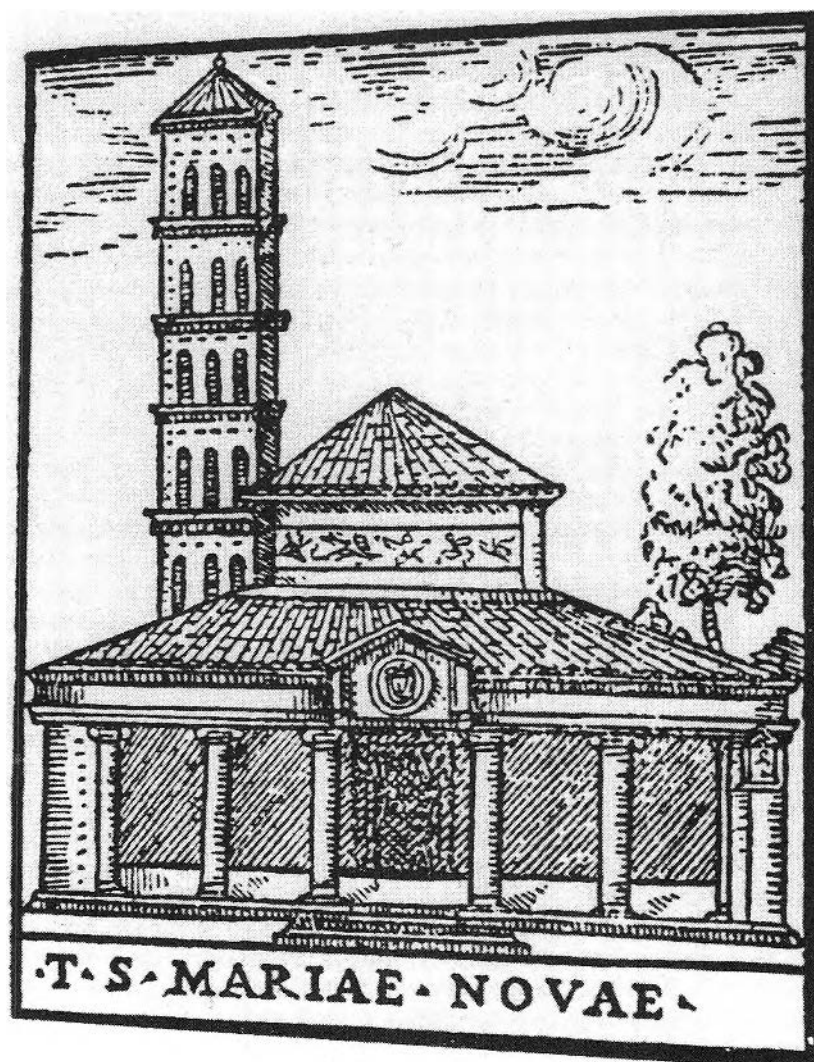
Christa Belting-Ihm's work has shown for the early Middle Ages, the areas of the triumphal arch and entrance walls of churches demarcate the boundary between the eternal and the historical realm, the sacred and the mundane world.[14] This study examines the evidence for a focus on theophanic images at the entrance during the later Middle Ages in Rome.

In comparison to monuments elsewhere in Europe, it is not surprising that thirteenth-century patrons, in Venice, Tuscany and central Italy, should be drawn to use mosaic as the medium for their messages on the facade, either across the entire width of the church, or in tandem with sculpture and stained glass in a more complex arrangement.[15] Since the focus of this paper is on the monuments in Rome, the history of facade mosaics in other Italian locations must be treated elsewhere. It can be maintained, however, that the decision to use mosaics on facades is a distinctively Italian response to the question of the appropriate decoration of church facades. As our next example suggests, although the medium may differ, the message is the same throughout Europe: the main entrances of Romanesque and Gothic churches were often decorated with theophanic imagery as part of a hierarchic ordering of images within and without.[16]

A facade mosaic representing the Ascension of Christ, or possibly the *Maiestas Domini*, was displayed at Santa Maria Nova (presently Santa Francesca Romana) in the Roman Forum, at some time between the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.[17] The brevity of sources makes it difficult to reconstruct the exact appearance of the mosaic, so we only have an approximate idea of its original aspect. A sixteenth-century woodcut by Francino for the book entitled *Le Cose Meravigliose* (written by Fra Santi) depicts the exterior of the church (fig. 2).[18] As the print shows, the portico of the building was supported by six columns. According to this source, the upper part of the facade featured a mosaic which probably covered the entire width of the nave.[19] Regrettably, Francino's rather sketchy technique cannot be used to identify the original subject matter of the mosaic.

An early seventeenth-century scholar of Rome's churches described the image in this way: "You may see ... the picture of the Ascension of Christ, which is on the cornice of Santa Maria Nova in Rome, where angels with spears lead Christ ascending, or rather he is lifted by a certain hand which is painted on high."[20] Pompeo Ugonio also mentioned the mosaic, although his sketch and accompanying note are virtually indecipherable (fig. 3).[21] His account confirms that the mosaic portrayed the figure of Christ flanked on either side by two angels carrying spears. The identification of the original subject matter of the mosaic as the Ascension of Christ, or perhaps a *Maiestas Domini*, rests on these sources.[22] Neither description mentions a row of Apostles with the Virgin, which would strengthen the

Figure 2. Exterior of Santa Maria Nova, Rome. Fra Santi, *Le Cose Meravigliose ... di Roma,* frontispiece by Gieronimo Francino, 1595 (Photo: author).

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ate response to the demands of eternal time, for repentance and purification, for viewing the matters of mundane existence within an eschatological framework. In this sense, all of the facade mosaics considered here would have been designed to complement the decorative programmes located within a particular church, to help the believer prepare for an encounter with the holy relics, images and spaces within.

Secondly, the facade mosaic may been used as a backdrop for the festivities surrounding the Feast of the Assumption which took place in front of the building each year. The sources for the procession provide some sense of the type of ceremony performed here. Wolf suggests that the procession through the Forum offered a concrete demonstration of papal responsibility, care and love for his flock in the city of Rome; this stational church in the Forum thus became an important site for the pope to visit in terms of his religio-political duty.[25]

We know that the Lateran *acheiropoieta* image of Christ was carried from the Sancta Sanctorum to Santa Maria Nova (before setting off to Santa Maria Maggiore) and was displayed before the entrance to the building, while the clergy and congregation engaged in responsorial chanting.[26] The "feet" of Christ on the panel were bathed with fragrant oils; Wolf argues that the ceremony represented a meeting of the two images, indicating a symbolic exchange charged with religio-political meaning between the people of Rome and the papacy.[27] At some stage in

identification of the theme as the Ascension of Christ. From a similar period, the theme of the Ascension of Christ was displayed in stone relief above the main entrance to the church of San Martino in Lucca, as well as being depicted in a large-scale mosaic on the exterior of San Frediano in Lucca and as a part of the original facade mosaic cycle at San Marco in Venice.[23] This theme was appropriate for a church entrance, as it stressed the triumph, honour and glory of the risen Saviour, as a promise of redemption at the threshold.

The facade mosaic may have worked in two contexts. The first of these was to complement the subject matter of the apse composition, which featured an enthroned image of the Virgin in majesty (as this was a church dedicated to Mary), flanked by SS Peter, James, Andrew and John the Evangelist.[24] Both apse and facade mosaic at Santa Maria Nova announce that the holy presences, Christ and the Virgin, reside in the court of heaven. The believer must consider within her- or himself an appropri-

the history of the church, whoever was responsible for the commission may have considered it important to have a monumental image of either the Ascension of Christ, or *Maiestas Domini,* on the church exterior, to frame the festivities, as well as to prepare the believer for the holy spaces within. This type of theophanic imagery, which announces Christ's triumphant reception in heaven, would have certainly complemented the proceedings taking place in front of the church.

There are other examples of similar social and material actions in relation to church doorways and facades in the Middle Ages. For example, during the pontificate of Sergius I (687-701), the entrance to the basilica of Theodore near the Lateran was known as *sub apostolis.* In a passage describing a conflict between the pope and the emperor Justinian II, we learn that Sergius decided to speak to the troops in a location that possessed a special air of authority because of the presence of an image (probably an icon) of the apostles Peter and Paul. The

Figure 3. Facade of Santa Maria Nova, Rome. Drawing by David MacGregor after Pompeo Ugonio, *Theatrum Urbis Romae*, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. lat. 1994, f.450, ca. 1580.
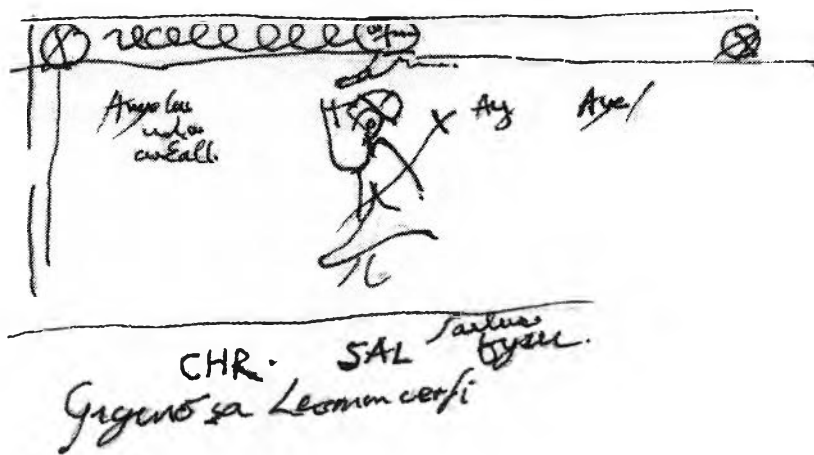
Liber Pontificalis states: "...[t]he pontiff went outside to the basilica named after the lord Pope Theodore; opening the doors and sitting on a seat beneath the Apostles, he honourably received the common soldiers and the people who came to see him..."[28] In a fourteenth-century example of this type of visual display, the annual Marian procession in Orvieto was organized so that the communal representatives had to pay allegiance to the ecclesiastical and juridical authorities of the town. The latter were seated in front of the church of Sant'Andrea, and above their heads was a sculpted image of the Saviour in an aedicule.[29] These images, in Orvieto or at the Lateran and Santa Maria Nova, clearly lent authority to the various ritualistic moments which took place in the spaces around and within the church, as well as working to construct notions of identity and power at different levels in society.

Santa Maria Nova is located near the Arch of Titus in the Forum; its once-glittering exterior would have drawn attention from a distance, just as, later in the century, the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline Hill nearby would have been noticed for its facade mosaics, one of which depicted the legend of St Francis on the southern flank.[30] The Aracoeli had been ceded to the Franciscans in the 1250s, and the main phase of rebuilding was complete by the end of the decade. It attracted the patronage of several important Roman families because of its location on the Capitoline. The mosaic on the *cavetto* moulding of the west facade is lost, with no record of its original subject matter, but the *cavetto* on the southern flank still bears traces of an image of the Dream of Innocent III, with St Francis depicted in the act of holding up the Lateran basilica. Andaloro presents a case for connecting the facade mosaic with the interests of the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV, while Bertelli argues that the mosaic had clear religio-political overtones. The latter suggests that the Minorites would have been linked with the promotion of peace and harmony in the city of Rome and that the mosaic reflects this ideal, as part of the self-promoting

strategies of the Colonna family who sought to extend their influence in various quarters of the city.[31] As I have argued previously about the Vatican facade mosaic, patrons (and, as this essay makes clear, their audiences) must have experienced a range of possible motives and meanings in relation to images such as this; the paucity of the evidence requires that we remain more open-ended in our conclusions about how specific images were conceived and read.[32] We may reasonably assume that the religious community using this building might have understood both the more contemporary, specific politics behind the imagery, as well as its more general implications, such as the idea that the mosaic served to represent the importance of the Order's task of mendicant preaching and religious renewal, both within Rome and abroad.[33]

A commission for another facade mosaic, that of Santa Maria in Trastevere, cannot be securely linked to the name of a particular patron at this stage; it may be the result of a capitular commission.[34] Its heavily restored condition and problematic history raise many questions about the original iconographic scheme, as well (fig. 4).[35] Two fragmentary obituary notices, published in the nineteenth century, record that two clerics either left money for the facade mosaic or had mosaic images repaired; their acts of patronage (and aspirations for redemption) may be recorded in the tiny figures kneeling at either side of the Virgin's throne, visible in the drawings by Antonio Eclissi.[36] There are probably three phases in the execution of the mosaic, which may have been separated one from the other by several decades.[37] The earliest part of the mosaic is dated to the 1250s. The central motif of the facade mosaic features the Virgin enthroned, as *Maria lactans*, flanked by two virgins holding lamps, possibly a reference to the theme of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The sign of the *agnus dei* contained within a medallion appears above the Virgin's head. Although the original intention may have been to represent the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, over time, the idea was changed so that the female figures ranged to the left and right of the Virgin variously bear different combinations of crowns, haloes and lighted lamps. It appears that the original idea for the mosaic shifted over time, perhaps to bring it in line with other contemporary monumental images in Rome, such as the now-lost scheme in the Oratory of San Silvestro at San Martino ai Monti, which featured several female saints holding lamps beneath the central image of the Enthroned Madonna.[38] The apparently piecemeal approach to the commission has taken its toll on the original. But, whichever way the mosaic is read, as a parable of judgement, or a court of heaven, the central motif of the inter-

Figure 4. Facade of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome, ca. 1250 onwards (Photo: Art Resource/Alinari, New York).

Figure 5. Detail of facade of San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome. Paris, Louvre, Giotto and workshop, *The Stigmatization of St Francis* altarpiece, early fourteenth century (Photo: Julian Gardner).


cession of Mary as merciful mother, and the promise of redemption in the *agnus dei*, reinforce the allusion to the day of Judgement and to the need for redemption and purification on the part of the believer. It is entirely appropriate that this church with its Marian dedication should have a facade mosaic that proclaims the glory of the Virgin, rather than the Christological imagery we have seen at the other churches surveyed thus far.

In the late thirteenth century Pope Nicholas IV was responsible for a campaign of restoration and redecoration that transformed the church of San Giovanni in Laterano.[39] The inscription in the apse, which was remade in 1883-84, alludes in part to a modification to the church's facade: "POPE NICHOLAS IV, SON OF THE BLESSED FRANCIS, CAUSED THE RUINED REAR AND FRONT SECTION OF THIS SACRED TEMPLE TO BE REBUILT FROM THE FOUNDATIONS AND ADORNED WITH WORKS IN MOSAIC ... THIS CHURCH WAS CONSECRATED, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1292".[40] In addition to the apse imagery, Nicholas appears to have replaced the external decorative scheme displayed above the main entrance to the Lateran basilica. This image was mentioned briefly by John the Deacon

in the twelfth century: "... on the exterior above the doors of the basilica is an image of the Saviour. On either side are Gabriel and Michael".[41] The vagueness of John's description does not permit us to identify the medium, size or precise location of the image on the facade; the possibility that this image was placed directly above the church doorways should not be ruled out.[42] Pope Nicholas may have decided to replace the image, in whatever medium it was originally executed, with a mosaic, placing it in a more visible location on the facade. Julian Gardner has demonstrated that the Louvre *Stigmatization* altarpiece by Giotto and his workshop depicts the facade of the Lateran with its mosaic of Christ flanked by two archangels, shown here as being on the upper part of the nave facade (fig. 5).[43]

Gardner argues that the mosaic was executed by Jacopo Torriti's workshop based on the stylistic analysis of the surviving fragment from the facade mosaic.[44] Apparently, both patron and artist chose to respect the iconographic scheme of the original facade image. As had occurred in the case of the patronage of Innocent III and Gregory IX for the Vatican apse and facade mosaics, Nicholas IV retained elements of an earlier composition in his new commission. Thus, even late in the

Figure 6. Anonymous drawing of the facade mosaic of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, seventeenth century (Photo: National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh).
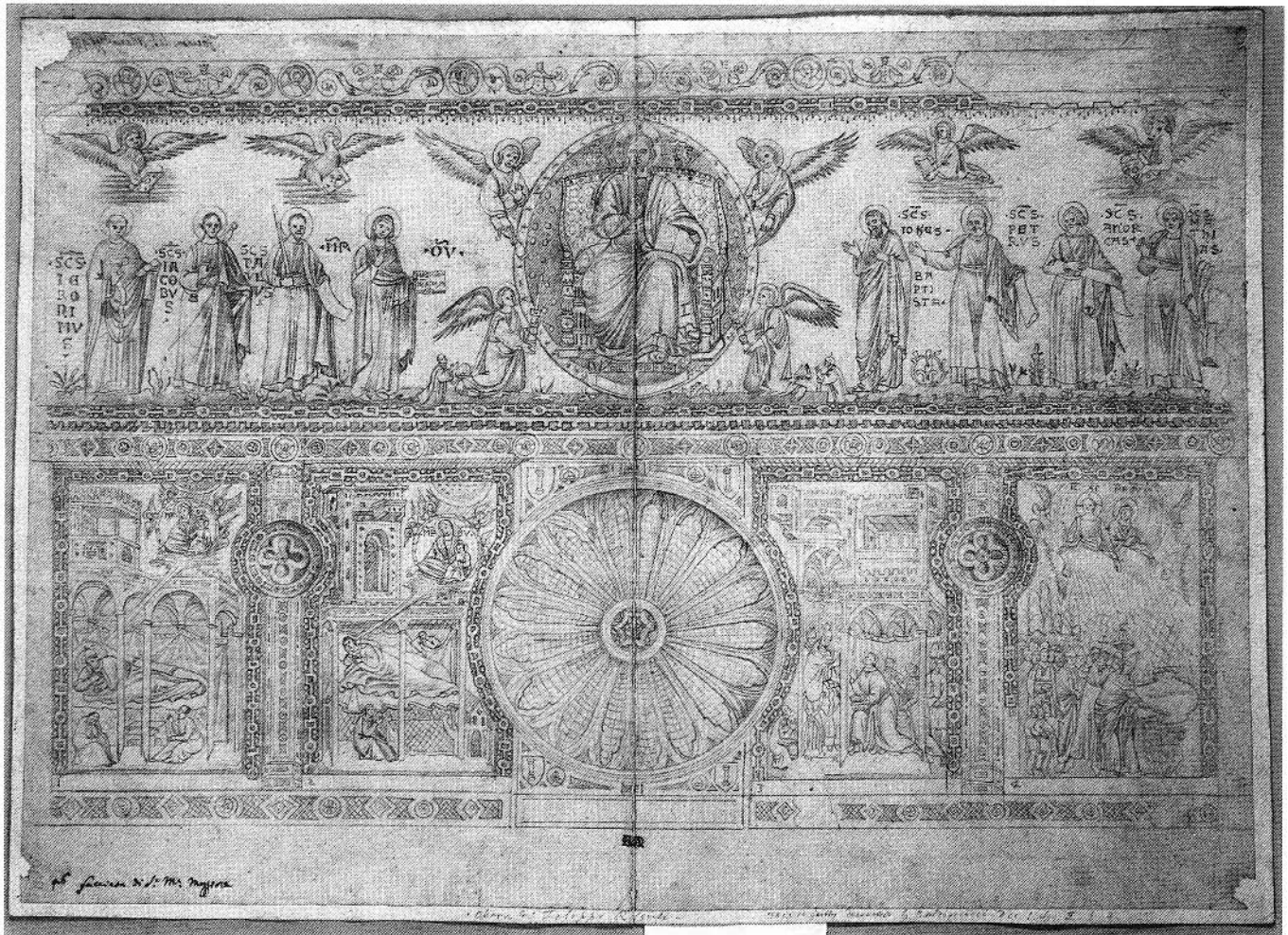
century, the papacy were still focussed on the maintenance and restoration of venerable works: the facade mosaic at San Giovanni was the result of the renovation of a model already in existence. During the course of later Baroque modifications to the facade, the image of Christ was retained in this location to complement the *veronica* of the apse mosaic. The idea that this image was in some way a *veronica* itself may help to explain its preservation in this location down to the present.[45] In his gesture of "restoration" of the Lateran facade image, it would seem that Pope Nicholas IV sought to preserve the authoritative status of the original composition and attest to the persistence of memory and the continued workings of the divine at this site in Rome.[46]

As we shall see, the last two monuments considered here, Santa Maria Maggiore and San Paolo fuori le Mura, share certain characteristics with the iconographic scheme on the Vatican facade. Pope Nicholas IV turned his attention to the rebuilding and redecoration of the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. He was apparently responsible for commissioning the facade mosaics, although the mosaic project was not commenced

until well after his death. The mosaics are still to a large degree extant, although not easily visible beneath the Baroque loggia that covers them; they are signed in the upper register by Filippo Rusuti.[47] Gardner convincingly suggests that they were completed under the auspices of Colonna cardinals who ensured that other sections of the work begun under Nicholas were carried out; more recently, Bertelli has shown how the Colonna made use of the imagery of the facade mosaic to further their aims in Rome.[48]

The programme of redecoration was rather special, for the exterior of the apse was also covered with mosaics. The visitor to the basilica on the Esquiline hill was welcomed at some distance by shining walls of gold and multi-coloured tesserae from *both* the front and back of the church. The choice of subjects on the exterior of the apse may have been inspired by the vision experienced by Cardinal Giacomo Colonna after the death in 1284 of his sister, Blessed Margharita Colonna.[49] A bust-length figure of the Madonna and Child was flanked by SS Agnes, Cecilia, Lucy and Catherine; below was a representation of the Adora-

Figure 7. Anonymous drawing of the facade mosaic of San Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome, seventeenth century (Photo: National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh).
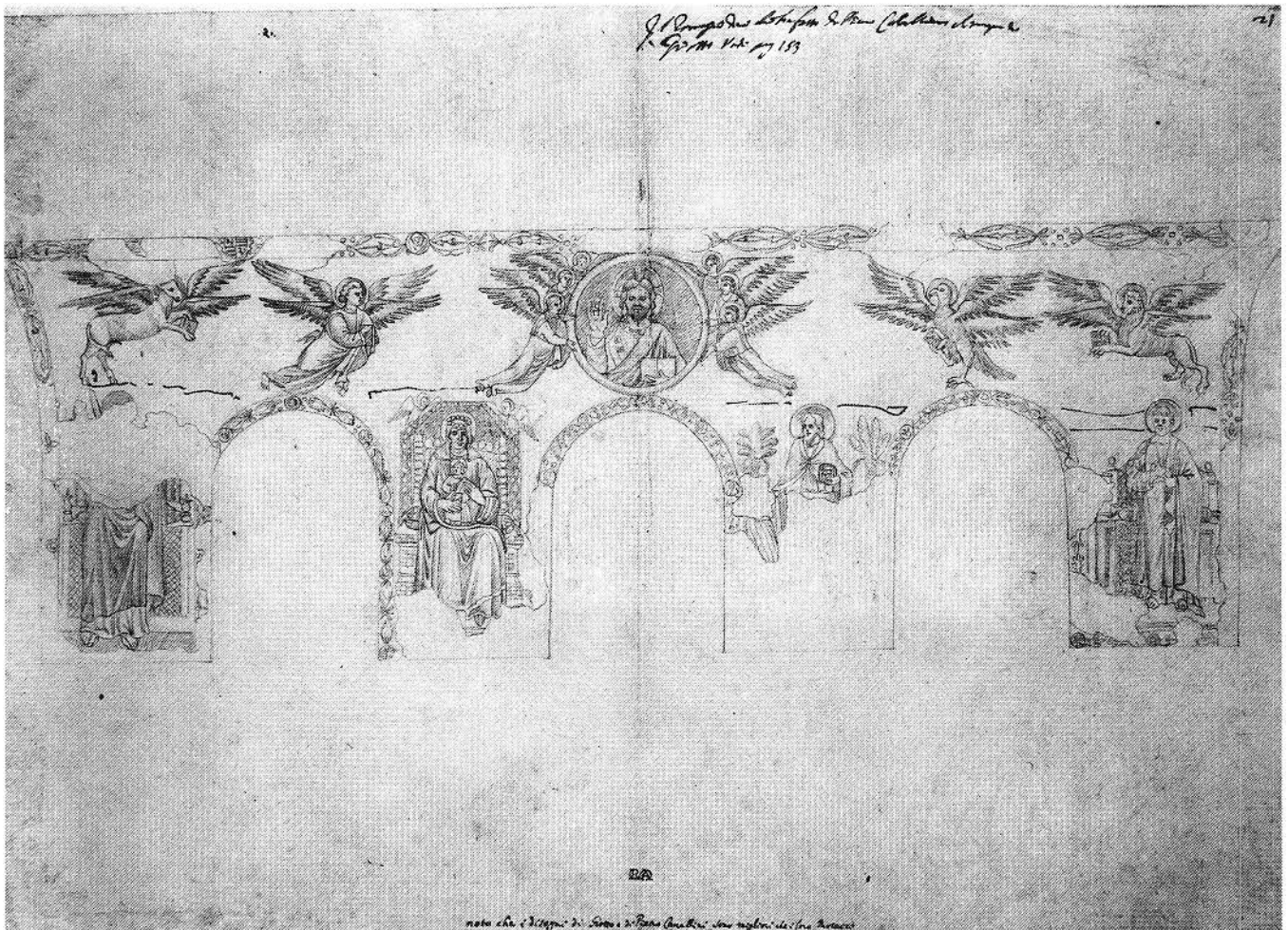
tion of the Magi, making an explicit connection with the important relic of the manger of Christ held within the building.[50] The apse, of course, faced the city of Rome, while the facade was turned toward the neighbourhood and community located on the Esquiline hill itself; Gardner has indicated the degree to which Colonna family interests would have been visible within and around this location.[51]

The main outline of the facade mosaic programme may be reconstructed as follows: it featured a central image of the Deesis, with the enthroned figure of Christ in Majesty attended by four angels, the four symbols of the evangelists, the Virgin and John the Baptist, together with a series of important male saints who were connected with the basilica; in the lower register, there were four narrative mosaics recounting the miraculous history of the basilica. Two of the mosaic's patrons, cardinals from the Colonna family, were originally represented kneeling at either side of Christ, as may be seen in a drawing from the National Gallery of Scotland (fig. 6).[52]

Although there are clear differences between this facade mosaic and the one at the Vatican, it seems likely that the decision to use Deesis imagery in the upper register was prompted in part by the authoritative model of the Petrine facade.[53] The presence and power of a panoply of patron saints standing near Christ and the two key intercessors, the Virgin and Baptist, would have reminded the onlooker of the need for penance and the role of specific saints (and the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore) within the sacred economy of Rome.

In choosing to depict the legend of the founding of the basilica in four narrative episodes in the lower half of the mosaic, we can see an attempt to create a particular tradition about the history of the church itself, a decision which has obvious parallels with the process of "recovering" the past by community members involved with the decoration of San Marco in Venice.[54] The anniversary of the founding of the Liberian basilica was not commonly observed except in Rome itself until the fourteenth century.[55] It seems surprising that a large part of the facade should be devoted to the depiction of the legend, and as far as we know, this is its first representation in Italian art. The dominant idea was to establish a visual tradition and claim a sense of a distinctive history for this building. In a general way,

Figure 8. Pope John XXII, detail of facade mosaic of San Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome. Drawing by David MacGregor after Alfonso Ciacconio, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 5407, f. 118, 1590.

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the medieval spectator would have been assured of access to special forms of divine power because of the prestigious relic collection and the many miracles associated with the building itself.

If we look in particular at the motives of the patrons, the mosaic commission provides another instance of late medieval "self-fashioning" on their part. Although it warrants further investigation, Gardner suggests that Pope Nicholas IV wished to see himself as a "second Liberius," in relation to the initial idea of the mosaic commission.[56] Similarly, Bertelli's identification of this work as the "Colonna-Mosaik," as an attempt to reinstate the dignity of disgraced family members, opens up new possibilities for future research on the self-fashioning strategies of patrons in this period.[57] As was the case in Pope Gregory IX's work on the facade of San Pietro, it would represent yet another instance of the patron(s) promoting a specific

set of charged associations between the early Christian papacy and contemporary church politics in the mind of the public.

The last work to be considered here dates from the time when the papacy had largely abandoned Rome, to settle in Avignon. As a result, papal patronage of the arts in Rome entered a state of decline, except for a few select commissions, such as the Stefaneschi altarpiece for the high altar in San Pietro in Vaticano.[58] One last important Roman facade remained without adornment, and this was to receive its mosaic covering during the pontificate of Pope John XXII (1316-34). The monks of the last "major" basilica in the city, San Paolo fuori le Mura, wrote to John in Avignon, informing him that the basilica was in desperate need of repair.[59] As a result, this pope made several donations to the basilica, and the facade was covered with mosaic. Cavallini and his workshop were called in to carry out the project, and the mosaic was executed between 1325 and 1330.[60] The mosaic was destroyed by fire in 1823, and the surviving fragments set up on the triumphal arch and the apse of the basilica. Several drawings and engravings provide us with an idea of the original format of the mosaic; a drawing from Edinburgh presents the most complete evidence of its lost form (fig. 7).[61]

As occurred with many of the facade mosaic projects in Rome at this time, the exterior was fitted out with a *cavetto* moulding.[62] In the upper zone of the mosaic was a medallion of Christ supported by angels, together with the symbols of the evangelists placed in a row along the facade. The standing figures of SS Peter and Paul were presented in the outermost compartments of the composition. As the space for the composition seems to have been smaller than that available at other locations, the Deesis was shown as a bust-length figure of Christ (to accommodate his larger scale), flanked by the Virgin Enthroned and a standing St John the Baptist towards the centre of the facade. The kneeling figure of the donor, Pope John XXII, was located at the feet of the Baptist, in the presence and under the protection of his patron saint. His appearance is recorded in a drawing by Ciacconio; the inscription on the facade mosaic, as recorded by Panvinio, stated: "MOST HOLY FATHER AND LORD, POPE JOHN XXII, CAUSED THE

PRESENT WORK TO BE MADE" (fig. 8).[63] Here we may see the patron's desire to participate in the "purchase of paradise," as had occurred with Pope Gregory IX at the Vatican, or Pope Nicholas IV at the Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore.[64] Once more, the invocation of Deesis imagery reminds the viewer of the power of the patron saints of the basilica, and the role of the Virgin and John the Baptist, who will intercede on the believer's behalf on the Day of Judgement.

As demonstrated in these examples, it would seem that we need to adopt a shifting perspective to examine the many different ways in which these mosaics become "posters" embodying a multiplicity of individual and communal needs and desires. As indicated above in the discussion of the mosaic from San Tommaso in Formis, the mosaics worked at moments as a form of advertisement, about the work of a particular Order or to establish the identity of communities associated with a specific site, as with the Franciscans at the Aracoeli. They were obviously capable of inspiring a salvific reading about the ongoing work of the divine within the mundane and extra-mundane realms. It is clear that these mosaics, with their focus on the intercession and presence of the saints at different locations, were authoritative images at the threshold that prepared the faithful for the encounter with the sanctuary within, and images of eternity holding out the promise of redemption to the patron and the public at large.

As this study has shown, an important decorative tradition integral to the churches of Rome had been established over the course of several decades. Two points emerged here: firstly, this group of Italian facade mosaics demonstrates that the choice of medium was an important aspect of creating an identity for ecclesiastical structures, and secondly, the idea of repeatedly using Deesis imagery was important at the Vatican, Santa Maria Maggiore and San Paolo. The Trinitarian monks of San Tommaso in Formis, Pope Gregory IX at the Vatican, the clerics at Santa Maria in Trastevere, Pope Nicholas IV, the Colonna cardinals, Pope John XXII and the monks at San Paolo fuori le Mura – these were all patrons who sought to create a powerful aura of venerability by choosing to decorate their structures with the "Christian" medium of mosaic. The past was at times used to legitimate the contemporary social and cultural order, by copying (and adapting) authoritative models, as occurred at San Pietro, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Paolo and, of course, the *veronica* image at the Lateran.

There can be little doubt that the various messages of the mosaics examined here helped to articulate a complex set of social relationships between medieval bodies and exterior space, constructing notions of eternal time, as signs of redemption and hope for the eternal life. At the same time, the mosaics were a way of responding to the world of the present, on behalf of patrons who lived and breathed within their own unique and specific political, social and spiritual framework, who were led to make sense of the mundane world in a moralizing and salvific context.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 C. Harding, "Dissent, Dissatisfaction and Papal Self-Fashioning: Pope Gregory IX's Response to the Thirteenth-Century Reform Movement in the Facade Mosaic of San Pietro in Vaticano," *RACAR (Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review)*, XXII (1995), 29–39.

2 The mosaic of the Navicella presents substantially different viewing conditions and will therefore not be examined here; see the recent study by H. Jansen–Köhren, *Giottos Navicella: Bildtradition, Deutung, Rezeptiongeschichte* (Worms, 1993). Future research on this topic might also include secular commissions, such as the facade projects of Cola da Rienzo in Rome.

3 See, for instance, the work on audience response by M. Caviness, "Biblical Stories in Windows: Were They Bibles for the Poor?," *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, ed. B. Levy (Binghamton, 1992), 103–47.

4 W. Sauerländer, "Romanesque Sculpture in its Architectural Context," *The Romanesque Frieze and its Spectator*, ed. D. Cahn (London, 1992), 17.

5 The Trinitarian order is discussed by R. Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* (London, 1974), 14–15, 151, 279.

6 For a study of San Tommaso in Formis, see P.A. dell'Assunta and A. Romano di S. Teresa, *San Tommaso in Formis* (Isola del Liri, 1927), and more recently, G. Cipollone, *Il Mosaico di S. Tommaso in Formis a Roma (ca. 1210)* (Rome, 1984). For the importance of medieval visions in general, see A. Paravicini Bagliani and G. Stabile, eds, *Träume im Mittelalter* (Baden–Baden/Darmstadt, 1989), 7–9.

7 According to Cipollone, *Il Mosaico*, 121–32, the mosaic was a sign of Pope Innocent's concern for the recovery of Holy Land sites.

8 The Latin reads: "SIGNUM ORDINIS SANCTAE TRINITATIS ET CAPTIVORUM".

9 As discussed by dell'Assunta and S. Teresa, *San Tommaso*, 8.

10 O. Hageneder and A. Haidacher, *Die Register' Innocenz III* (Graz–Cologne, 1964–), I, 703–08, n. 481.

11 G. Ortalli, *La Pittura Infamante nei secoli XIII–XVI* (Rome, 1979), 46–49, analyses the significance of location for the display of such images throughout Italy.

12 G. Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kulturbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim, 1990), and H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago and London, 1994), 302.

13 This essay does not discuss the related material of portico pro-

grammes with smaller-scale mosaic compositions, as at the Lateran; see, for example, I. Herklotz, "Der mittelalterliche Fassadenportikus der Lateranbasilika und seine Mosaiken," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, XXV (1989), 25–95, who draws a close connection between exterior spaces, the portico mosaics and papal ceremonial.

14 C. Belting–Ihm, "Theophanic Images of Divine Majesty in Early Medieval Italian Church Decoration," *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, ed. W. Tronzo (Bologna, 1989), 43–59, esp. 54. I am grateful to James Bugslag for drawing my attention to a recent study by M. Fassler, "Liturgy and Sacred History in the Twelfth-Century Tympana at Chartres," *Art Bulletin*, LXXV, 3 (1993), 499–517; her ideas on time and history as articulated in the sculptural programmes at Chartres provide an important parallel for understanding the facade mosaics.

15 See C. Harding, "Facade Mosaics of the Dugento and Trecento in Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio," Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1984.

16 Sauerländer, "Romanesque Sculpture," 32–43.

17 A brief account of the church's history is given by P. Lugano, *Santa Maria Nova (Santa Francesca Romana)*, Le Chiese di Roma Illustrate, n. 1 (Rome, n.d.).

18 Fra Santi, *Le Cose Meravigliose dell'alma città di Roma dove si tratta delle chiese rappresentate in disegno di Gieronimo Francino* (Rome, 1595).

19 R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianorum*, 5 vols (Vatican City, 1937), I, 236; see also R. Malmstrom, "S. Maria in Aracoeli at Rome," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1973, 253.

20 "Sic accipe in pictura Ascensionis Christi quae est in frontespicio S. Mariae Novae Romae, ubi deducunt angeli cum baculis ascendentem Christum, seu assumptam a manu quadam quae appingitur alto...," as described by Jean l'Heureux writing around 1600. The text is published in *Hagioglypta sive Picturae et Sculpturae Sacrae antiquores, praesertim quae Romae reperiuntur explicatae a Johanne l'Heureux, Macario*, ed. R. Garrucci (Paris, 1856), 87.

21 See Pompeo Ugonio, *Theatrum Urbis Romae*, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. lat. 1994, f.450, written ca. 1580; scholars agree that the facade displayed a mosaic because of Ugonio's reference to this medium written directly above the sketch.

22 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, I, 237–81, argued that the mosaic represented the Virgin holding a cross flanked by angels; in a private conversation (28 March 1982), he revised his opinion, preferring the idea that it represented the Ascension of Christ.

23 See G. Kopp, *Die Skulpturen der Fassade von San Martino in Lucca* (Worms, 1981), 46–47, 102–04. For San Frediano, see Harding, "Facade Mosaics," 220–24. See O. Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco*, 4 vols (Chicago–London, 1984), II, 1, 192–206, for the Venetian mosaics.

24 For a discussion of the dating of the apse mosaic, see Harding, "Facade Mosaics," 145.

25 Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, 49 and 55.

26 See M. Andrieu, *Les ordines romani du haut moyen-âge*, 5 vols, (Louvain, 1961), V, 68–71. For recent discussions of the procession, see W. Tronzo, "Apse Decoration, the Liturgy and the Percep-

tion of Art in Medieval Rome: S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore," *Italian Church Decoration*, ed. Tronzo, esp. 174–82; and Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, 38–69.

27 Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, 49–55.

28 *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)*, trans. R. Davis (Liverpool, 1989), 85. See also S. De Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale: Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Marie, Sancti Petri* (Città del Vaticano, 1994).

29 W. F. Volbach, "Il Cristo di Sutri e la Venerazione del SS. Salvatore nel Lazio," *Atti della Pontifica Accademia Romana di Archaeologia, Rendiconti*, XVII–XIX (1940–41), 120–21, n. 60.

30 On the Aracoeli facade mosaic, see P. Casimiro, *Memorie istoriche della Chiesa e del Convento in S. Maria in Aracoeli in Roma* (Rome, 1736), 28; J. Gardner, "The Louvre Stigmatization and the Problem of the Narrative Altarpiece," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, XLV (1982), 217–47, esp. 229; A. Recio Veganzones, "Escena musiva medieval en la fachada de araceli (Roma)," *Antonianum*, LVII (1982), 259–85; C. Bertelli, "Römisches Träume," and J. Gardner, "Päpstliche Träume und Palastmalereien: Ein Essay über mittelalterliche Traumikonographie," *Träume im Mittelalter*, 91–112 and 113–24. For fragments of the mosaic, see M. Andaloro, "Il Sogno di Innocenzo III all'Aracoeli, Niccolò IV e la basilica di S. Giovanni in Laterano," in *Studi in onore di Giulio Carlo Argan* (Rome, 1984), 29–37, figs. 1–7.

31 Andaloro, "Il Sogno di Innocenzo III," 32, and Bertelli, "Römisches Träume," 95.

32 Harding, "Dissent, Dissatisfaction," 36–37.

33 As with other examples presented here, the exterior decoration would also have prepared believers to enter the church; see Bertelli, "Römische Träume," 99, for the connection between Cavallini's apse fresco of the Madonna and Child and the facade decoration.

34 See W. Oakeshott, *The Mosaics of Rome* (London, 1967), 244–47; and G. Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali delle Chiese di Roma*, 2 vols (Rome, 1967), I, 305–14.

35 For antiquarian drawings of the mosaics, see S. Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom* (Vienna–Munich, 1964), cat. nos. 507–13, fig. 288–94.

36 For the drawings by Eclissi, see Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien*, fig. 293–94. See P. Egidi, *Necrologi e libri affini della Provincia Romana*, 2 vols (Rome, 1969–70), I, 95, 99, for the list of donors.

37 As argued by D. Kinney, "S. Maria in Trastevere from its founding to 1215," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1975, 301–06.

38 Harding, "Facade Mosaics," 160–66.

39 See J. Gardner, "The Influence of Popes' and Cardinals' Patronage on the Introduction of the Gothic Style into Rome and the surrounding area 1254–1305," Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute, 1969, 232; and V. Hoffmann, "Das Fassade von S. Giovanni in Laterano 313/314–1649," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, XVII (1978), 3–46. For Nicholas IV, see A. Franchi, *Nicolaus Papa IV, 1288–1292 (Girolamo d'Ascoli)* (Ascoli Piceno, 1990).

40 As recorded in V. Forcella, *Iscrizioni delle Chiese e d'altri Edifici di Roma dal secolo II fino ai giorni nostri*, 14 vols (Rome, 1876), VII, 14; see A. Tolmei, "I calchi del mosaico absidale di San Giovanni in Laterano," *Fragmenta Picta: affreschi e mosaici staccata del medievo*

romana, M. Andaloro et al. (Rome, 1989), 239–42, for relevant bibliography.

41 "...[E]xterius vero super easdem fores ecclesiae est imago Salvatoris. Hinc et inde imagines Gabrihelis et Michaelis". For a discussion of this passage in the manuscripts of John the Deacon, see Hoffmann, "S. Giovanni in Laterano," 8, n. 36.

42 Harding, "Facade Mosaics," 71–76, 166–71.

43 Gardner, "Popes' and Cardinals' Patronage," 232, and *idem,* "Louvre Stigmatization," 229.

44 See Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV and the Decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte,* XXXVI (1973), 1–50, for Torriti's work as an artist; and *idem,* "Popes' and Cardinals' Patronage," 232.

45 The fragment is illustrated in G. Galassi, *Roma o Bisanzio* (Rome, 1929), fig. 186. See also Hoffmann, "S. Giovanni in Laterano," 31–36.

46 The sense of the past at the Lateran is discussed by R. Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 1980), 56–58, 90.

47 Gardner, "Santa Maria Maggiore," 1–50; and Matthiae, *Mosaici medioevali,* I, 381–84.

48 Gardner, "Santa Maria Maggiore," 1–3; and Bertelli, "Römisches Träume," 107. See also E. Thunø, "The Dating of the Facade Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome," *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici,* XXIII (1996), 61–82, for an analysis of their chronology.

49 For the Blessed Margherita Colonna, see Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon,* 174–79, and the study by L. Oliger, "B. Margherita Colonna," *Lateranum,* n. s., I (1935), 83–88.

50 The now-lost exterior apse mosaic is illustrated in Gardner, "Santa Maria Maggiore," fig. 18. For a discussion of the acquisition of the relic of the manger of Christ, see Krautheimer, *Rome,* 90.

51 Gardner, "Santa Maria Maggiore," 1–2.

52 J. Gardner, "Copies of Roman Mosaics in Edinburgh," *Burlington Magazine,* CXV (1973), 587–91.

53 Harding, "Dissent, Dissatisfaction," 35.

54 See the work of T. Dale, "*Inventing* a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice, ca. 1000–1300," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* XXXXVIII (1994), 53–104; and P. Fortini Brown, "*Renovatio* or *Conciliatio?* How Renaissances Happened in Venice," in *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy,* ed. A. Brown (Oxford, 1995), 132–43.

55 See, in particular, S. J. P. Van Dijk, "Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thirteenth-Century Roman Liturgy," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum,* XLVIII (1955), 450–56 (cited in Gardner, "Santa Maria Maggiore," 49).

56 Gardner, "Santa Maria Maggiore," 32. However, John Osborne noted in a private conversation (15 January 1999) that Liberius's reputation was being seriously questioned during the late thirteenth century.

57 Bertelli, "Römisches Träume," 107.

58 See M. Faucon, "Les Arts à la Cour d'Avignon sous Clement V et Jean XXII," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire,* II (1882), 36–81; and J. Gardner, "The Stefaneschi Altarpiece: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XXXVII (1974), 57–103.

59 The documents are published by P. Hetherington, *Pietro Cavallini* (London, 1980), Appendix I, 153–54.

60 Hetherington, *Cavallini,* 111–15. See also J. Wilpert and W. Schumacher, *Die römischen Mosaiken der kirchlichen Bauten von IV–XIII Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1976), 86–88.

61 Gardner, "Copies," 587–91.

62 Harding, "Facade Mosaics," 171.

63 The Latin reads: "SANCTISSIMUS PATER ET DOMINIS JOHANNES XXII PAPA QUI FECIT FIERI PRESENS OPUS," as discussed by Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien,* 55.

64 Harding, "Dissent, Dissatisfaction," 36.