

Concerning the Origin of the Virgin of Humility Theme

Joseph Polzer

Volume 27, numéro 1-2, 2000

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1069720ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069720ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Polzer, J. (2000). Concerning the Origin of the Virgin of Humility Theme. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 27(1-2), 1–31.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1069720ar>

Résumé de l'article

Parmi les diverses représentations visuelles de la Vierge à l'apogée de son culte, à la fin du Moyen-Âge, se trouve le thème populaire de la Vierge de l'Humilité. Son origine est souvent associée à la fresque de Simone Martini peinte v. 1335–40 au-dessus de la porte sous le porche occidental de la cathédrale d'Avignon. La fresque montre la Vierge tenant l'enfant Jésus dans ses bras, assise sur la terre : humus = humilitas. L'examen attentif de l'art italien précédant indique que le type de la Vierge posée au sol fut inséré dans les scènes de la Vie de la Vierge antérieurement à la fresque de Simone Martini. Par exemple, dans la fresque de Giotto à Padoue la Vierge de l'Annonciation s'agenouille devant l'archange Gabriel, alors qu'auparavant elle se tenait presque toujours debout, et la Vierge s'évanouissant dans la Crucifixion, en partie soutenue par les Maries, descend sur ses genoux avant de s'étendre complètement au sol, ce que l'on voit, par exemple, dans la Crucifixion d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti du Musée Fogg à Cambridge. Aussi, dans la peinture populaire contemporaine italienne, la Vierge est souvent représentée assise sur le sol dans les représentations de la Sainte Famille. En coïncidence avec l'origine de la Vierge de l'Humilité, dans le livre de Pétrarque conservé à la bibliothèque Ambrosienne à Milan, Simone Martini a représenté Virgile, poète lauréat, assis dans la nature. Il semble qu'à cette époque la terre, ou la nature, perdait en partie son sens religieux négatif qui se voyait remplacé par l'idée d'une force créatrice et inspiratrice. Mon étude met aussi en lumière le patronage du petit polyptyque pliable « Orsini » de Simone Martini par le cardinal Napoléon.

Concerning the Origin of the Virgin of Humility Theme

JOSEPH POLZER, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Résumé

Parmi les diverses représentations visuelles de la Vierge à l'apogée de son culte, à la fin du Moyen-Âge, se trouve le thème populaire de la Vierge de l'Humilité. Son origine est souvent associée à la fresque de Simone Martini peinte v. 1335–40 au-dessus de la porte sous le porche occidental de la cathédrale d'Avignon. La fresque montre la Vierge tenant l'enfant Jésus dans ses bras, assise sur la terre: humus = humilitas. L'examen attentif de l'art italien précédant indique que le type de la Vierge posée au sol fut inséré dans les scènes de la Vie de la Vierge antérieurement à la fresque de Simone Martini. Par exemple, dans la fresque de Giotto à Padoue la Vierge de l'Annonciation s'agenouille devant l'archange Gabriel, alors qu'auparavant elle se tenait presque toujours debout, et la Vierge s'évanouissant dans la Crucifixion, en partie soutenue par les Maries, descend sur

ses genoux avant de s'étendre complètement au sol, ce que l'on voit, par exemple, dans la Crucifixion d'Ambrogio Lorenzetti du Musée Fogg à Cambridge. Aussi, dans la peinture populaire contemporaine italienne, la Vierge est souvent représentée assise sur le sol dans les représentations de la Sainte Famille. En coïncidence avec l'origine de la Vierge de l'Humilité, dans le livre de Pétrarque conservé à la bibliothèque Ambrosienne à Milan, Simone Martini a représenté Virgile, poète lauréat, assis dans la nature. Il semble qu'à cette époque la terre, ou la nature, perdait en partie son sens religieux négatif qui se voyait remplacé par l'idée d'une force créatrice et inspiratrice. Mon étude met aussi en lumière le patronage du petit polyptyque pliable « Orsini » de Simone Martini par le cardinal Napoléon.

The Virgin of Humility theme represents one of the most significant innovations found in fourteenth-century religious art. It is widely considered that this new version of the Virgin's cult in the later Middle Ages emerged from Simone Martini's later artistic career when he had settled in Avignon. Not long before his death he painted there, above the entrance of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame-des-Doms, the first extant Madonna seated on a cushion which rests directly on the ground, so situated that every visitor would pass deferentially beneath her (fig. 1). Seated on her knee, the Christ Child holds a scroll on which is written: "*Ego sum lux mundi*" (John VIII, 2). It is believed that the mural was painted for Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi, a great patron of the arts, who kneels in prayer beside the Virgin.¹ This mural was intended for the funeral of Cardinal Stefaneschi which took place in this cathedral in 1341² (the cardinal was buried subsequently in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome). This date would agree with the resemblance in figure style of this mural with Simone Martini's *Holy Family* in Liverpool which is dated by inscription 1342 (fig. 2).

The iconography of the Virgin of the Humility theme has been thoroughly investigated by Millard Meiss and more recently by Henk van Os.³ Following its presumed invention sometime during the early forties of the Trecento by Simone Martini, or someone belonging within his closer artistic circle, it expanded widely throughout Italy and Western Europe. Meiss underscored that the comparatively formal-frontal pose of the Christ Child in the Avignonesse mural differs from the intimate Virgin *lactans* composition which occurs quite frequently in early examples of the Virgin of Humility iconography, insisting, however, that both versions seem to revert to a prototype created by Simone Martini or a close associate, corresponding approximately in time of origin to the Avignonesse mural. Among these early examples dating into the fifth decade of the Trecento

belong a small panel painting in Berlin which I attribute to Lippo Memmi (fig. 3), a mural decorating a Neapolitan tomb in the Church of S. Domenico, and a panel painting by Bartolommeo da Camogli in Palermo which is dated 1346 (fig. 4). It bears the inscription: "*Nostra Donna de Humilitate*."

The rapid diffusion of the Virgin of Humility theme throughout late medieval western Europe occurred in a suitable religious climate: like a flower blossoming in fertile soil. It was a religious climate which favoured meditation on the life of Christ and his mother the Virgin. In the realm of art mother and Son were then represented in a diversity of ways reaching from the Virgin enthroned surrounded by a heavenly court of saints and angels to the Virgin of Humility who squats plainly on the ground. Simone's remarkable *Maestà* in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico and Duccio's superlative altarpiece originally serving the high altar of Siena Cathedral precede by roughly three decades Simone's Avignonesse *Virgin of Humility*. These two types of Virgins were not contestants for lone supremacy. Rather, they served complementary roles. The Virgin seated or kneeling humbly on the ground, although no longer bearing the title of "Humility" and henceforth appearing in the open, remains firmly established in fifteenth-century Siena, especially in the oeuvre of Giovanni di Paolo, and, more popular than ever before, in the High Renaissance works of Giovanni Bellini, Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo!⁴

The circumstances surrounding the crystallization of the Virgin of Humility theme in the early Trecento deserve closer scrutiny. As has been stated, the name itself is borrowed from the text: "*Nostra Donna de Humilitate*," which appears on an actual Trecento painting representing her. It is a legitimate historical label. The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* defines "*Humilitas*" as follows: "*Humilitas* | *ab humilis* | *ab humus*: *Humilis*: *situs terrae humo vicinus* (etc.)" – that is, low, near the

Figure 1. Simone Martini, *The Virgin of Humility*, ca. 1341. Sinopia, Portal, Notre-Dame-des-Doms, Avignon (Photo: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites).



ground, the earth. This meaning was already given by Isidore of Seville: "*Humilis, quasi humo adclinis.*"⁵

Humility is taken metaphorically to signify the lowest human condition. In the Christian mind, however, humility, opposed to the vices of pride, vanity and ambition, is transformed into a virtue signifying one's utter worthlessness in the light of God.⁶ However, as a general principle in the medieval scheme virtue is identified with heaven whereas vice adheres rather to the ground, the earth where nature breeds, which is unclean. Accordingly, the medieval mind can thus choose, contingent on the particular virtue, whether the ground serves virtue or vice. Humility, crowned and holding an image of Christ before her torso, appears closest to heaven in an image of the virtues in the *Liber Scivias* of Hildegard von Bingen in Wiesbaden, unfortunately lost since 1945 (fig. 5).⁷ Her appearance resembles that of the Virgin in Majesty. She may also rise from the very earth after which she is named. This happens in representations of the *Tree of Virtue* in *Speculum Virginum* manuscripts where she appears as the *Radix* or *Mater Virtutum*.⁸ As the carnal universe, or nature, becomes more acceptable in the evolution of late medieval religious devotion, especially in the ambient of Franciscan thought, so does the connection of humility with the ground, the earth. This does not mean that sacred metaphor which superposes virtue over vice is dismissed. Rather, both conventions carry on side-by-side. Certainly, the virtue of humility, aware of its connection to the ground, gains in popularity from the thirteenth century onward. The example of St

Francis' proverbial humility surely contributed to this trend. In the *Specchio di perfezione* Brother Leo refers to the perplexion of Cardinal Ugolino of Ostia (who later became Pope Gregory IX) when the cardinal saw that the Franciscan friars at S. Maria della Porziuncola had no tables nor beds, but slept and ate on the ground.⁹ They experienced humility as a way of life! Awareness of Franciscan humility then reached the highest social strata. Fra Salimbene records in his chronicle that King Louis IX of France (St Louis!), upon visiting a humble Franciscan monastery, sat with the friars on the dusty ground of their unpaved church.¹⁰

Significantly, humility came to represent the perfect purity of the Virgin required for her selection by God as the appropriate vehicle of Christ's incarnation. Consider the words of St Bernard in his homily, *Super missa est*: "*Si igitur Maria humilis non esset, super eam spiritus sanctus non requierisset nec impraegnisset Et si placuit ex virginitate, tamen ex humilitate concepit.*"¹¹ As the medieval cult of the Virgin gained in popularity, and the mendicant orders preached everywhere on her life and that of her incarnate son, the virtue of humility became more intimately connected to her person.

The crystallization of the Virgin of Humility theme in the art of the late Middle Ages around 1340 (or perhaps sometime before), as is presently thought, was not a sudden event, but was prepared by the stepped descent of the Virgin onto the ground on which she kneels, sits and eventually even lies. This can be observed in scenes of many episodes from her life including the

Figure 2. Simone Martini, *The Holy Family*, 1342. Painting on wood, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (Photo: Board of Trustees, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside [Walker Art Gallery]).



Figure 3. Lippo Memmi, *The Virgin of Humility*, ca. 1340. Painting on wood, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (Photo: Walter Steinkopf, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin).



Figure 4. Bartolommeo da Camogli, *The Virgin of Humility*, 1346. Painting on wood, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palermo (Photo: Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palermo).

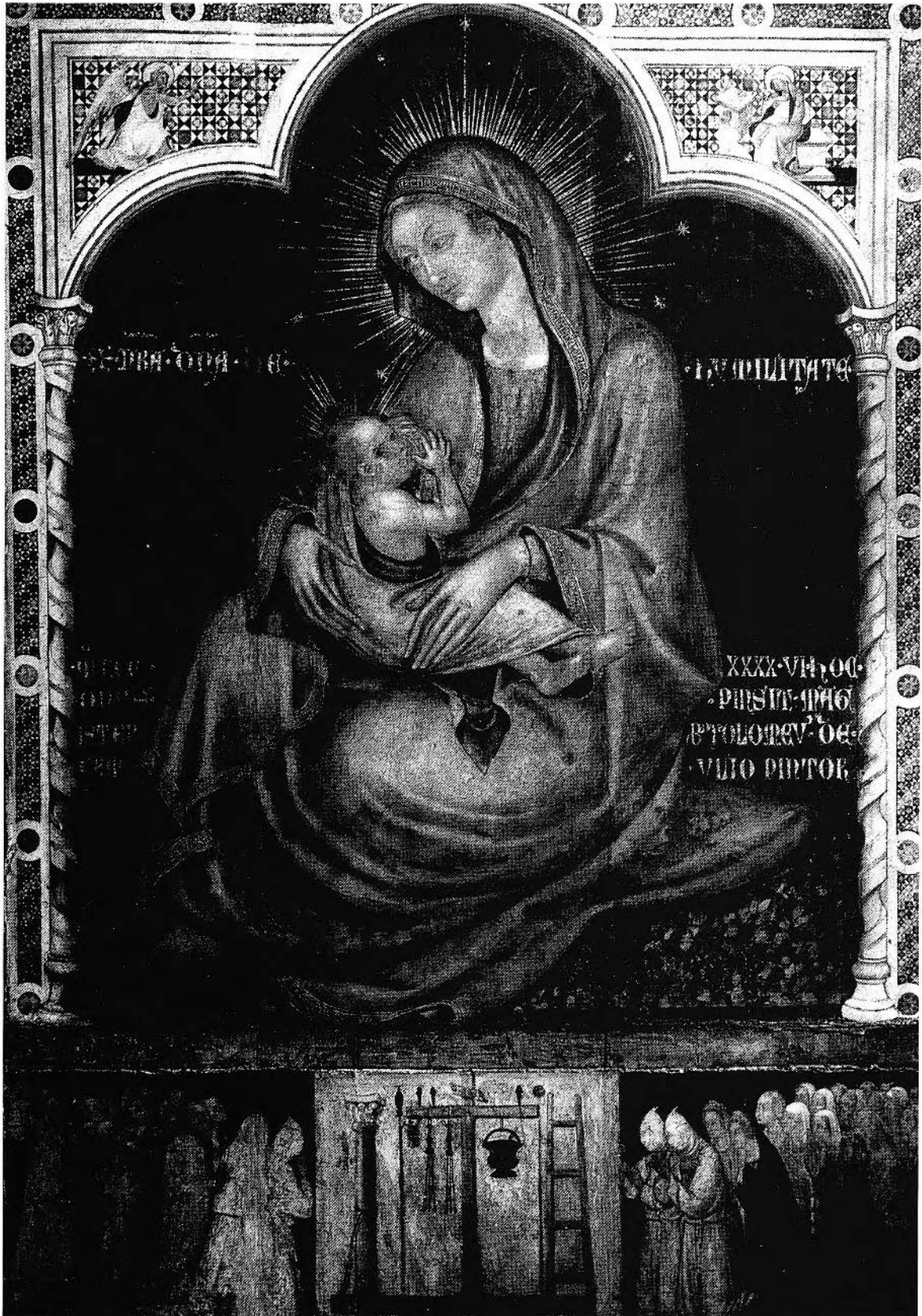
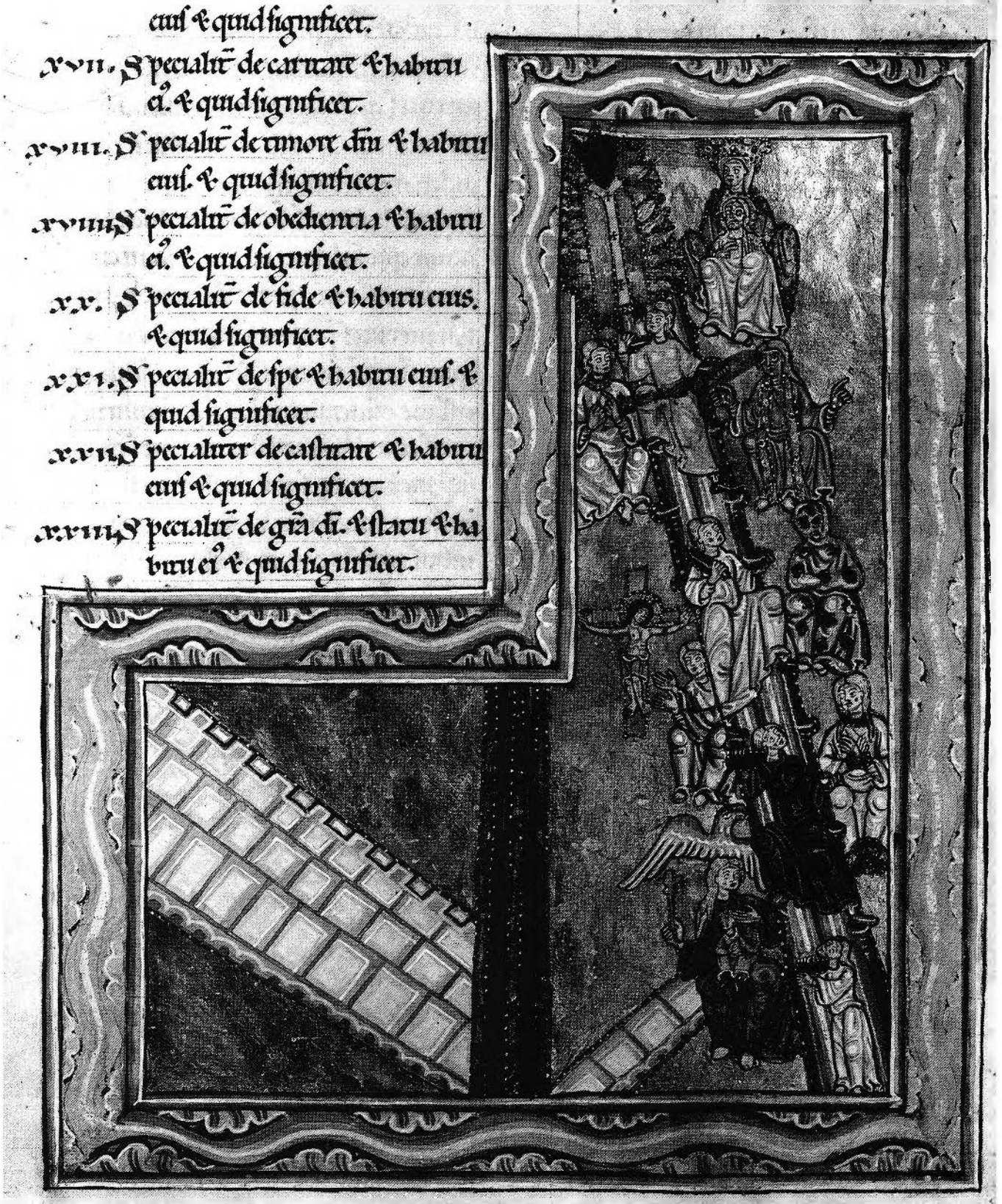


Figure 5. Hildegard von Bingen, *Liber Scivias*, ca. 1175. Wiesbaden, Landesbibliothek, MS I, fol. 178, lost since 1945 (Photo: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln).



Annunciation; the Holy Family depicted in its chamber; and especially in the Crucifixion. Indeed, as will be seen, by about 1340 the Virgin seated, sinking toward or lying on the ground appeared quite widely in the art of Italy, and especially that of Siena.¹²

Consider the Virgin Annunciate. Most usually she stands or sits on a bench or throne beside the Angel Gabriel. She appears enthroned on the 1333 altarpiece in the Uffizi Gallery which bears the names of both Lippo Memmi and Simone Martini. To my knowledge, her earliest appearance seated on the ground occurs on Taddeo Gaddi's mural in the Baroncelli Chapel in the church of S. Croce in Florence which belongs around 1330 (fig. 6).¹³ Around the middle of the fourth decade of the Trecento Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted a remarkable fearful crouching Virgin Annunciate clutching a column in the sinopia recovered not long ago at Montesiepi (fig. 7). Eve Borsook observed that this image follows a pilgrim's report of a column situated in the house of Mary which she clutched in fear as the Angel Gabriel appeared before her.¹⁴ However, by the first decade of the century Giotto's Virgin Annunciate already kneels on one knee in the Arena Chapel (fig. 8). She has been considered the first kneeling Virgin Annunciate of the proto-Renaissance.¹⁵ I strongly suspect that this half-kneeling Virgin is largely derived from the *Meditations of the Life of Christ*, that remarkable Franciscan devotional treatise dating from the later thirteenth century which deeply influenced the art of its period.¹⁶

The author, a Franciscan friar who probably wrote the *Meditations* late in the Dugento at S. Gimignano for the spiritual edification of Clares, dwells on the prudence and humility of the Virgin prior to Gabriel's appearance. He then writes: "(She) consented (to God's instruction), and knelt (!) with profound devotion and, folding her hands (!), said, 'behold the handmaiden of God; let it be to me according to your word' (Luke I, 38)." And then, states the treatise, she conceived.¹⁷ In Giotto's mural her kneeling position with her arms folded over the chest identifies the moment of her conception! Two other Siennese panel paintings showing the Virgin Annunciate seated on a cushion which rests on the ground, one in the Stoclet Collection in Brussels close to Simone Martini¹⁸ and the other in the Hermitage by Lippo Memmi,¹⁹ probably date after the formation of the Virgin of Humility iconography.

The Virgin seated on the ground, or close to it, also frequently appears in proto-Renaissance Siennese paintings offering the Holy Family in its private chamber, surely destined for private devotion.²⁰ The best known of these is Simone Martini's *Holy Family* in Liverpool which is dated by inscription 1342, where the Virgin is seated on a plain low stool (fig. 2). Interestingly, in an earlier *Holy Family* belonging to the ambient of Ambrogio Lorenzetti where Joseph converses intimately with

the Christ Child and the Virgin, in the Abegg Collection in Riggisberg (fig. 9), all three are seated directly on the ground. Erling Skaug, who has inventoried Ambrogio's motif punches according to the impressions which they have left in his paintings, has dated this panel persuasively in the early thirties of the Trecento.²¹ In the circle of the Lorenzetti and the Ovile Master, the Virgin seated on the floor of her chamber returns in a number of other panel paintings, as this subject matter extends into the second half of the century.²² Interestingly, the Virgin seated on the floor of her chamber is even found in Flanders, in no less than Robert Campin's *Annunciation* at the centre of the Mérode Altarpiece (fig. 10).

Around the late Dugento and early Trecento the Virgin also slumps to the ground in scenes of the Crucifixion, while before she stood beside the cross in sorrow. Her extreme grief was often represented by the act of her fainting at the witness of Longinus thrusting his lance into Christ's side. In his pulpits Nicola Pisano shows this act of her fainting in two different ways. In the Pisa pulpit she bends her upper body sideways at a sharp ninety-degree angle, following a Byzantine convention, while in the later Siena pulpit her feet give way beneath her as they bend in a swaying pose. Significantly, sometime later she descends toward the ground on which she sits or kneels, and eventually even lies.

In south Italian *Crucifixions* her decent toward the ground begins sometime before 1300. She is seated beside the cross, extending both arms toward her crucified son, in a mural painting of this period in the crypt of the Church of the Crucifix in Salerno (fig. 11). Her eyes are closed, representing her unconscious state. Another seated Virgin of about the same date, similarly reaching toward her dead son, appears in a *Crucifixion* mural in the Church of S. Maria in Vescovio near Rieti where St John the Evangelist is also seated in meditation.²³ The composition of this mural closely resembles the *Crucifixion* on an enamel plaque decorating the Chalice of Benedict IX in Perugia which can be dated before 1304.²⁴ It is surely of Siennese manufacture and would document the passage of the theme of St John and the Virgin seated beside the cross into Tuscany.

The fainted Virgin seated on the ground in scenes of the Crucifixion may have been borrowed from a mid-thirteenth-century version of the *Lamentation*. The medieval *Lamentation* focuses on the *threnos*: the Virgin's last kiss of her Son whom she embraces prior to his burial. However, the mural by the St Francis Master in the lower nave of the sanctuary of St Francis at Assisi, which is usually dated around the 1260's, represents her, differently, with her eyes closed as she kneels, sustained by the other Maries, on the ground beside Christ's body (fig. 12).²⁵

The fainting Virgin also appears on the marble *Crucifixion* plaque in the Church of S. Pellegrino alla Sapienza in Siena (fig. 13). To one side of the cross sits a fainting Virgin sustained by

Figure 6. Taddeo Gaddi, *Virgin Annunciate*, ca. 1330. Mural painting, Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence (Photo: Soprintendenza BAS, Firenze).



Figure 7. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Virgin Annunciate*, ca. 1330. Sinopia, Montesiopi (Photo: Zenit, Pistoia).



Figure 8. Giotto, *Virgin Annunciate*, before 1305. Mural painting, Arena Chapel, Padua (Photo: Musei Civici Padova).



two Maries, while St John, sitting at the opposite side, contemplates the crucified Christ. Here the Virgin's hands no longer reach toward her dead son, but hang limp toward the ground. The inanimate Virgin's upward-turned face is directed toward Christ's face, tilted downward in her direction, a theme which already appears on Giovanni's Pistoia pulpit. Irene Hueck, attributing this relief to Guccio di Mannaia on the basis of the close resemblance of the crucified Christ and the other figures to those appearing on Guccio's signed Chalice of Nicholas IV in Assisi, which has been placed between 1288 and 1292, dates the marble plaque later around 1310.²⁶

The composition of the marble *Crucifixion* corresponds closely to the text relating the death of the Lord in the *Meditations of the Life of Christ*: "What did the faithful Magdalen, what did John, beloved above all, what did the other two sisters of the Lady do now? Behold, then, the Lord hangs dead on the cross; the whole multitude departs; the most sorrowful mother remains with those four. *They seat themselves near the cross contemplating their Beloved (!)*."²⁷ It is tempting to propose that this text is quoted, as the themes of meditation, sorrow and being seated on the ground are here combined.²⁸

In their reduced selection of principal participants these

Figure 9. Ambient of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Holy Family*, early thirties of the Trecento. Painting on wood, Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg (Photo: Abegg-Stiftung Bern).



Figure 10. Robert Campin, *The Merode Altarpiece*, ca. 1430. Painting on wood, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cloisters Collection, New York City (Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art).



examples follow largely the preferred medieval convention of representing the Crucifixion in an effective nuclear manner, which stands in contrast to the expanded narrative versions of the Passion emerging in proto-Renaissance art, culminating in Pietro Lorenzetti's panoramic *Crucifixion* mural in the lower sanctuary of St Francis at Assisi.

This medieval convention, reduced to just the three principal figures, and including the new theme of the sorrowing and meditating Virgin and St John the Evangelist both seated on the ground beside the cross, is found throughout the Trecento and extends well into the Quattrocento. It appears on a *Crucifixion* relief on a pier of the west facade of Orvieto Cathedral.²⁹ There

Figure 11. *Crucifixion*, late thirteenth century. Mural painting, Crypt, Church of the Crucifix, Salerno (Photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Roma).



John looks toward Christ as he clasps one knee, while the Virgin looks downward in sorrow. The composition of this relief compares closely with the *Crucifixion* appearing on the pulpit of S. Sisto in Pisa.³⁰ While the Orvietan relief probably dates around the third decade of the Trecento, the Pisan *Crucifixion* may be considerably later. This convention is also found in Siense Trecento painting. It appears on a diptych close to the Lorenzetti³¹ and, within a more populated setting, in Luca di Tommè's *Crucifixion* predella panel in the Vatican.³² Curiously, this convention is not found in Duccio's known oeuvre or that of his ambient, with the exception of a late *Crucifixion* panel by a follower dating from the thirties or even later.³³ It appears repeatedly in the Quattrocento, in Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Crucifixion* relief on his first bronze door on the Florentine Baptistry and Antonello da Messina's small *Crucifixion* panels, etc.

Significantly, early in the Trecento the fainting Virgin sinks to the ground beside the cross in many multi-figured Italian *Crucifixions*. A fainted Virgin, assisted by three women as she is seated beside the cross, dating, most probably, from the second decade of the century, appears on a fresco close to Giotto in the lower right transept of the sanctuary of St Francis at Assisi (fig. 14). The mural obviously stresses the different responses to Christ's supreme sacrifice by those present, ranging from the thoughtful sorrow of St John, the dramatic gesturing of two wailing women, the Magdalen's intimate feelings as she is about to kiss Christ's bloody feet, the praying soldier's recognition of Christ's divinity, to the pharisees leaving the scene in dismay, including, of course, the fainted Virgin who is beyond grief. Last but not least, the presence of the three kneeling Franciscans worshipping the dead saviour

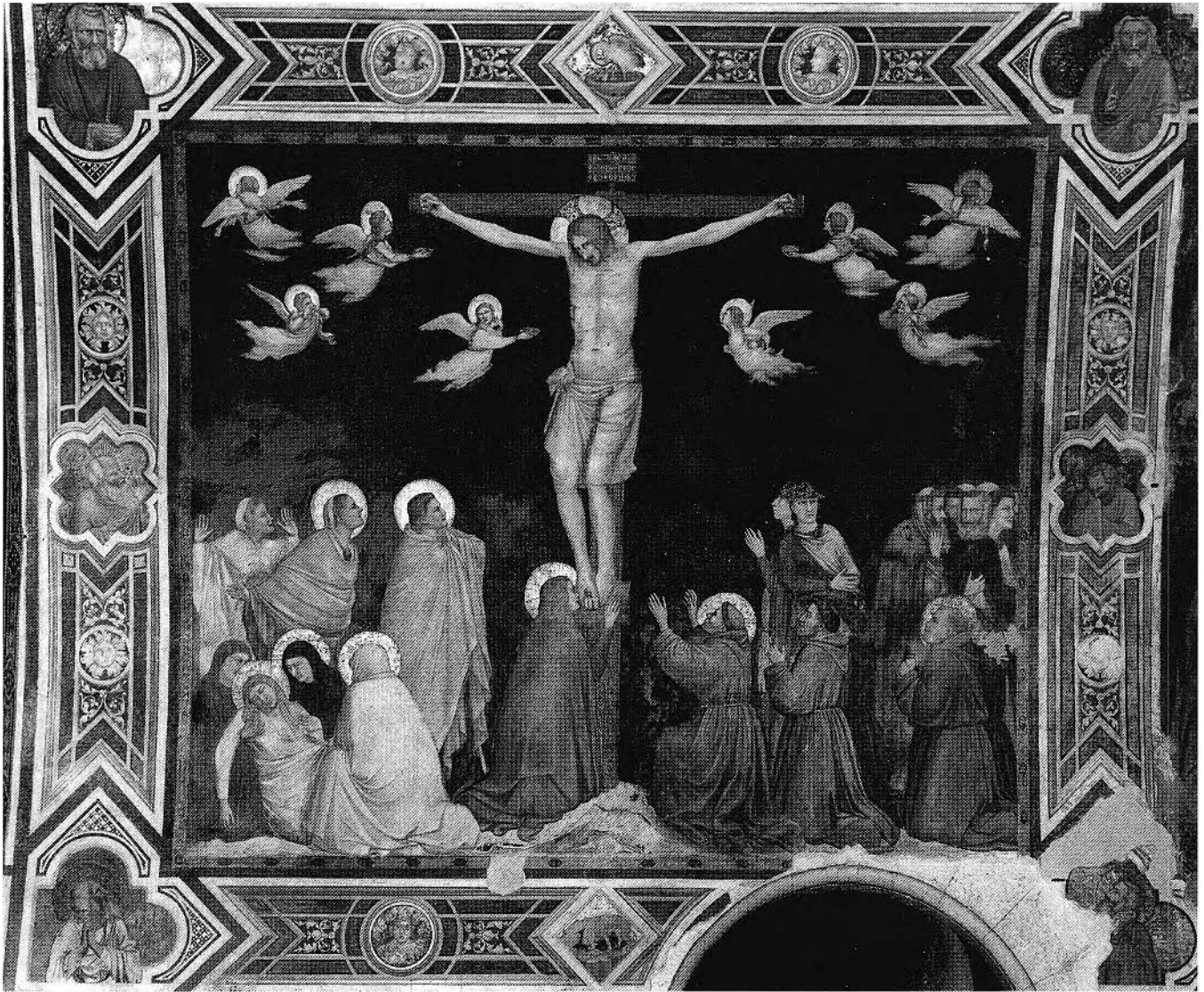
Figure 12. Saint Francis Master, *Lamentation*, ca. 1260's. Mural painting, Lower Church of St Francis, Assisi (Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).



Figure 13. *Crucifixion*, ca. 1310. Incised marble plaque, San Pellegrino alla Sapienza, Siena (Photo: Grassi).



Figure 14. Giotto (?), *Crucifixion*, ca. 1310. Mural painting, Lower right transept, Church of St Francis, Assisi (Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).



represents their meditation on the Passion. Their particular physiognomies would indicate that they were actual members of the Franciscan community. At Assisi they follow the example of St Francis who already appears, kneeling in profound meditation at the foot of the cross, in Cimabue's two *Crucifixion* murals in the upper transept.³⁴

The *Crucifixion* mural originally located in the south-eastern corner of the cloister of the Campo Santo in Pisa (fig. 15), being the earliest of the extant murals in the Pisan cemetery, can hardly date much beyond 1330 at the latest. Incontrovertible technical evidence places it before its impressive neighbour: the well known *Triumph of Death*, which belongs in the mid-thirties.³⁵ Here, as in the Assisi mural, the fainting Virgin kneels on the ground sustained by the Maries.

She descends to the ground twice in the fascinating Cavallinesque Passion cycle in the Church of S. Maria Donnaregina in Naples which dates after circa 1316–18.³⁶ There the Crucifixion is depicted in two successive moments: an exceptional occurrence in proto-Renaissance monumental painting. In the first scene, where Christ is nailed to the cross, the fainting Virgin is seated on the ground, sustained by the Maries (fig. 16). Differently, in the second scene the fainting Virgin collapses forward as Longinus thrusts his lance into Christ's side (fig. 17). Obviously, the theme of the fainting Virgin interested the Neapolitan painter. Here the dramatic narrative – but not the style – is allied to that of the *Crucifixion* in the Pisan Campo Santo.

Only a matter of degrees separates the fainting Virgin on

Figure 15. *Crucifixion*, ca. late 1320's. Mural painting, Campo Santo, Pisa (Photo: Brogi).



Figure 16. Cavallini ambient, *Christ nailed to the Cross*, after 1318. Mural painting, S. Maria Donnaregina, Naples (Photo: Alinari).



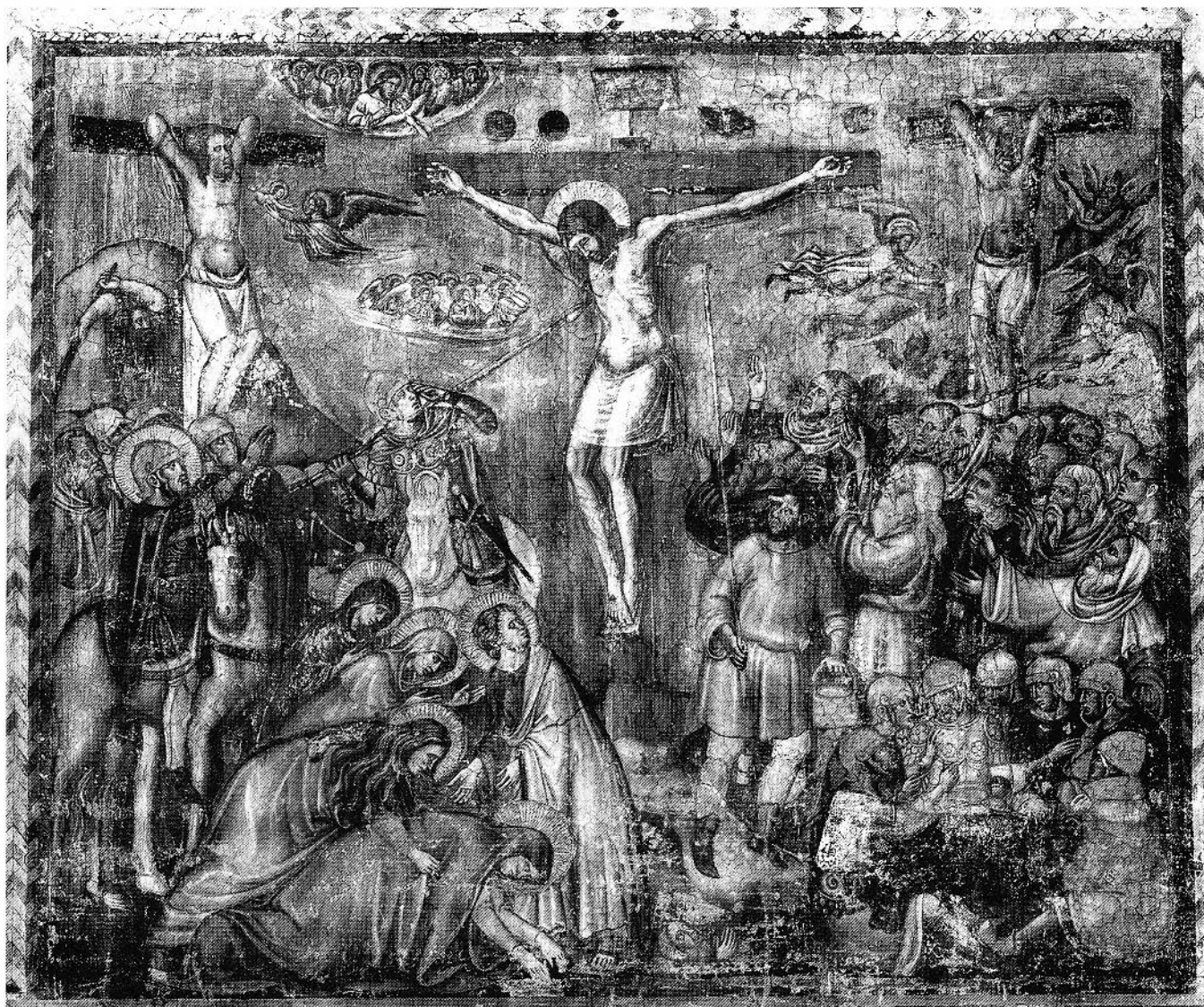
the Neapolitan mural from her appearance in Simone Martini's remarkable diminutive Orsini polyptych where she lies on the ground, her head and upper body supported by one of the assisting women (fig. 18). It is named after the Orsini arms which appear on the covers visible in its closed, folded state. Half open one saw the Annunciation extending over two panels, and fully open it revealed the Passion of Christ in four successive scenes: the *Road to Calvary*, presently in the Musée du Louvre; the *Crucifixion* and *Deposition* which are in Antwerp; and the *Entombment* in the new Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. This diminutive polyptych surely served its owner for his personal devotional practice, conveniently accompanying him on his travels. Although fewer in number, the motif punches used in its production correspond closely to those found in the Uffizi *An-*

nunciation of 1333 which bears the names of both Simone and Lippo Memmi. The patron who kneels beneath the cross in the *Deposition* is surely Cardinal Napoleone Orsini (see below). Plausibly, the polyptych was painted soon after Simone settled in Avignon sometime after 1333.³⁷

The Orsini *Crucifixion* is timed at the moment of the lance thrust. Interestingly, the lance thrust is also represented in the pulpit reliefs of Nicola and Giovanni Pisano. However, it does not appear in Duccio's *Crucifixions* – neither in the Siena Cathedral Altarpiece nor in the Boston triptych – nor does it appear in Giotto's *Crucifixion* mural in the Arena Chapel.

Most probably, the convention of connecting the lance thrust to the inanimate Virgin lying on the ground as evident in the Orsini polyptych, or fainting as in the Cavallinesque mural

Figure 17. Cavallini ambient, *Crucifixion*, after 1318. Mural painting, S. Maria Donnaregina, Naples (Photo: Alinari).



in Naples, is also based on the *Meditations*. Its author considered the lance thrust in some detail. He contrasts the humility of the Virgin to the cruelty of the soldiers, relating how she pleads in vain on her knees (!) that they should not disfigure the body of her dead son. She does so in vain for “Longinus, ... scorning ... prayers and entreaties, opened a great wound in the right side of the Lord Jesus. ... Then the mother, half dead, fell into the arms of the Magdalen.”³⁸ In the Pisan version the Virgin who has fainted is yet kneeling, sustained by the Maries, although the lance thrust has already occurred as angels receive the blood and water flowing forth from Christ’s opened side into a chalice.

Tederigo’s *Crucifixion* mural in the Collegiata of San Gimignano (fig. 19), which most probably dates in the thirties

of the Trecento, clearly belongs within this trend.³⁹ Here the fainted Virgin lies on the ground, her head resting on a woman’s lap. The wailing Magdalen kneels before her, and a group of women and children look on,⁴⁰ similar to their appearance on the Pisan *Crucifixion* mural. It is tempting to connect their presence in these *Crucifixions*, as well as in the murals of S. Maria Donnaregina in Naples, with the instructions given by the author of the *Meditations* to his devout reader that he imagine himself physically present at the Passion.⁴¹

Another small *Crucifixion* panel by Tederigo in the Vatican (fig. 20) surely dates not long after the San Gimignano mural. As on the latter, the Virgin is seated on the ground, her upward-turned inanimate head resting on a Mary’s lap. The compressed cavalry appearing at the right side, the foreshortened horses, the

Figure 18. Simone Martini, *Orsini Polyptych*, detail: *Crucifixion*, ca. 1335. Painting on wood, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp (Photo: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp).

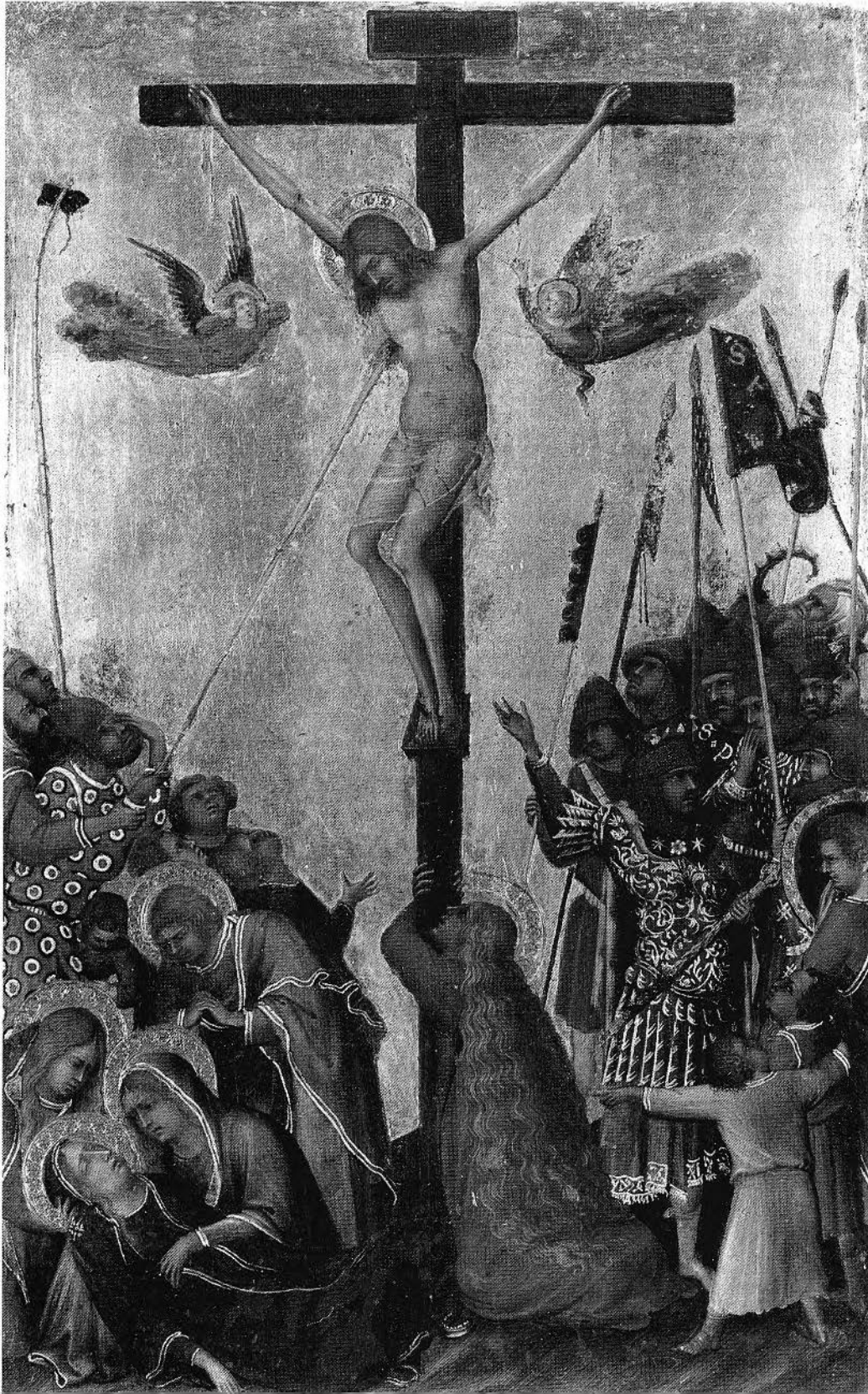


Figure 19. Tederigo, *Crucifixion*, detail: the Fainted Virgin, ca. 1335. Mural painting, Collegiata, San Gimignano (Photo: Artini).

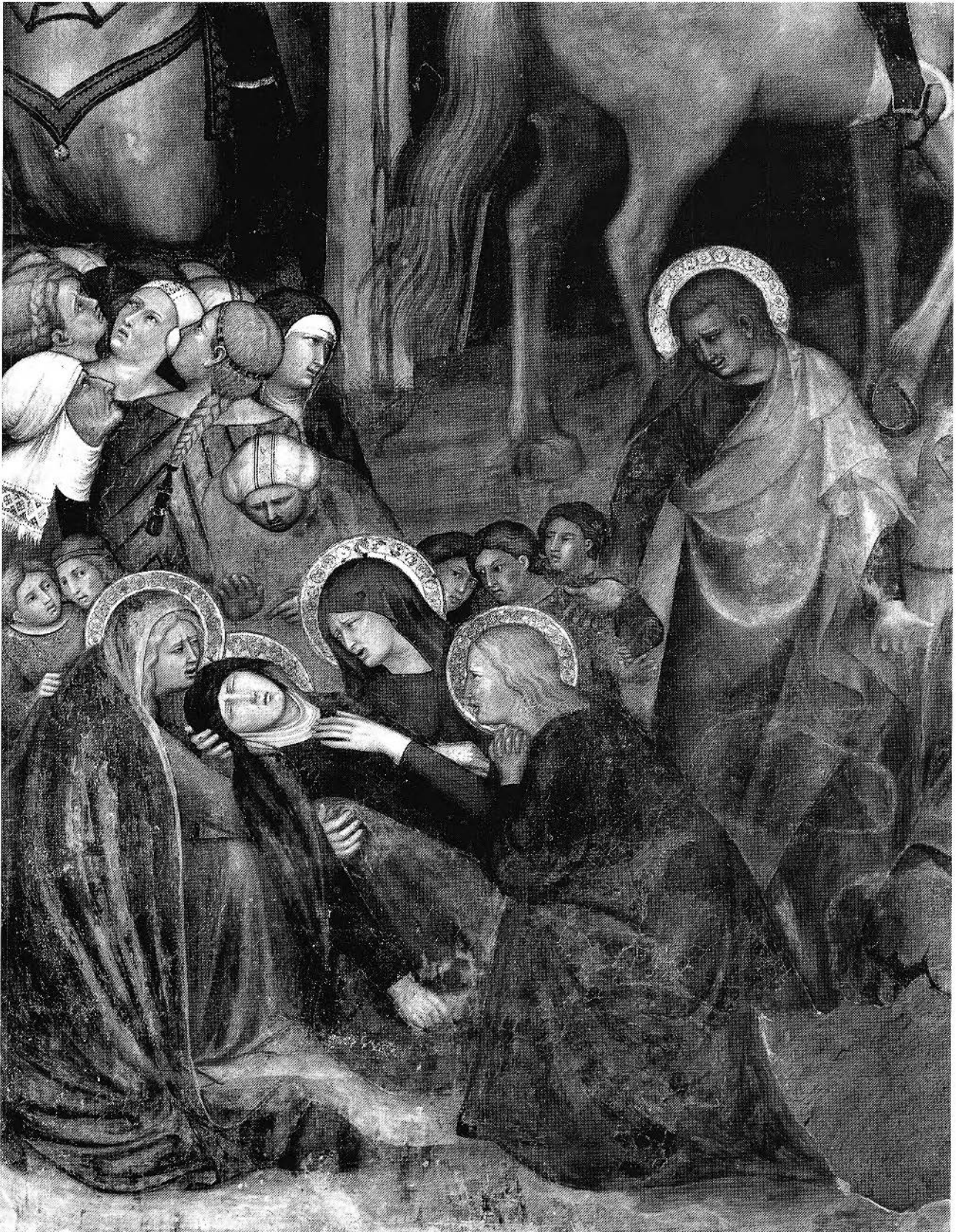


Figure 20. Tederigo, *Crucifixion*, 1330's. Painting on wood, Pinacoteca, Musei Vaticani (Photo: Alinari).

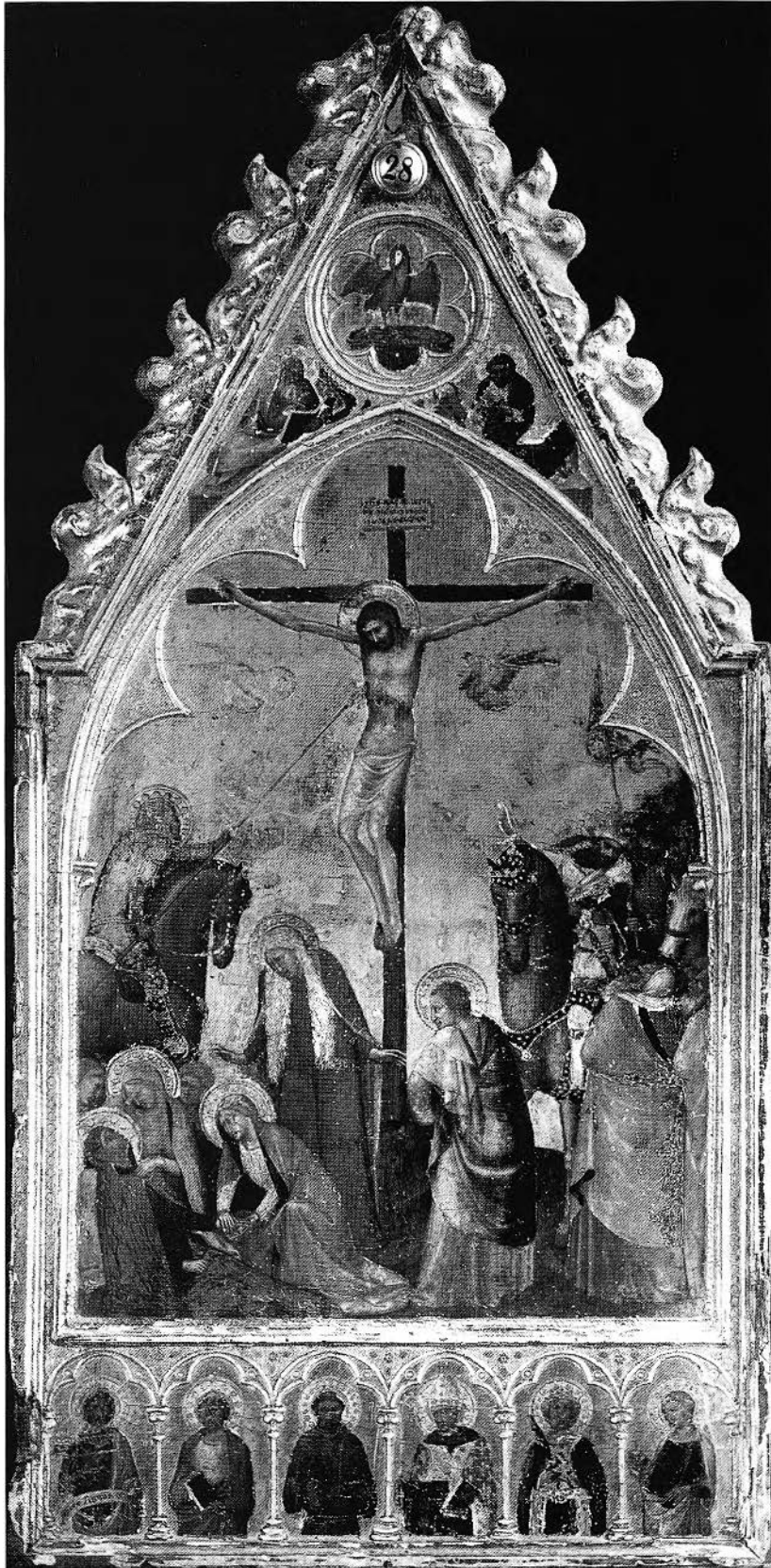
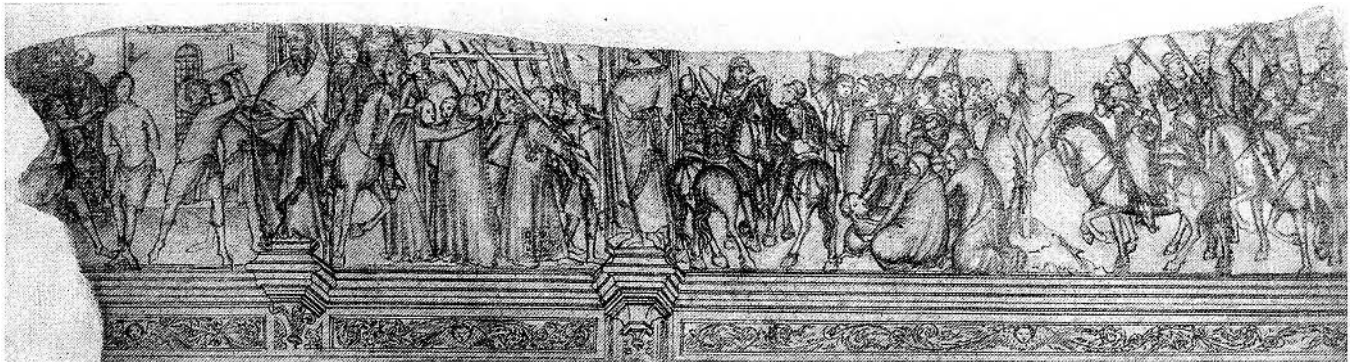


Figure 21. Drawing of lost *Crucifixion* relief of ca. the 1330's in Orvieto Cathedral, British Museum, London (Photo: British Museum).



identical equestrian Longinus thrusting his lance into Christ's side seen partially from the back, the identical bearded figure in the lower right corner: all these features are surely derived from Tederigo's mural. Aspects of the punched ornament would place the painting into the later thirties or early forties of the century.

Known from a drawing in the British Museum, a many-figured *Crucifixion* relief once decorated the *tramezzo* of Orvieto Cathedral, which included soldiers and cavalry, and also the inanimate Virgin who is gently lowered by the Maries to the ground while the compassionate John the Evangelist looks on (fig. 21).⁴²

Ambrogio Lorenzetti also adopted the Virgin lying on the ground in his small delicate *Crucifixion* panel in the Fogg Museum (fig. 22). She lies supine, her head again supported by a Mary. Until recently this painting was considered a late work by the master. However, Erling Skaug has placed it persuasively around 1332 on the basis of correlating its punch motifs with those found in Ambrogio's dated works.⁴³ As Mojmir Frnta and Federico Zeri have indicated,⁴⁴ Ambrogio's Fogg *Crucifixion* formed a diptych with Pietro Lorenzetti's Berlin *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, thus representing an enterprise shared by both brothers. I find that Ambrogio's figure style in the Fogg painting owes much to his brother. For example, the crucified Christ resembles much more closely Pietro's painted cross in Cortona than Ambrogio's painted cross in the Siena Pinacoteca. On the other hand, the relaxed contour of the Virgin's reclining body resembles that of Ambrogio's fluid and relaxed infant Christ figures, such as the one in the early Vico l'Abate panel. The stylistic evidence would support a comparatively early date within Ambrogio's career.

Since the origin of the Virgin of Humility theme has been connected to Simone Martini's activity in Avignon, it is useful that one consider his Orsini *Crucifixion* (fig. 18) more closely. The mound-like arrangement of figures at both sides of the cross is obviously a conservative feature which brings to mind

Duccio's *Crucifixions*. However, now the fainted Virgin has sunk to the ground, the lance thrust is depicted, and the observing children are also present. In addition, certain features are clearly linked to Tederigo's mural in S. Gimignano (fig. 19). Longinus' green cloak covered with yellow disks appears in both paintings. The careers of Simone, Lippo and Tederigo were closely linked, and they were surely aware of what each other was doing.

Did Simone paint the Orsini polyptych in Siena or Avignon? The shared use of the same motif punches which are found in the Uffizi *Annunciation* would indicate the former, unless some of the motif punches travelled with the painter. The identity of the Orsini donor, who is represented in the Antwerp *Deposition* (fig. 23), may also be relevant. The donor appears dressed as a cardinal deacon at the foot of the cross which is drenched in Christ's blood. The presence of the Orsini arms identifies him as a member of this illustrious Roman family. At the time no less than three Orsini were cardinals: Giovanni Gaetano from 1316 to his death in 1335; Matteo from 1327 to 1340; and Napoleone, the most distinguished, who died at the ripe old age of 78 in 1342. He was infirm for many years toward the end of his life. Petrarch comments on an unusual lost portrait of Napoleone painted by Simone. It represented the defunct cardinal in the act of addressing posthumously Pope Clement VI who had been a personal friend, asking him to look after Napoleone's personal physician John of Arezzo who was himself quite old at the time.⁴⁵ It is unfortunate that this remarkable "speaking" portrait is lost.

In Simone's *Deposition* the donor, kneeling directly below the cross, directs his eyes at the nails which have been removed from Christ's body and are held devotionally by a woman at the right side of the scene.⁴⁶ This exceptional arrangement makes one wonder if possibly a relic of a holy nail (or nails) may not have influenced this composition. Here Rohault de Fleury supplies interesting information. In his *Instruments de la Passion*, written more than a century ago, he states that he himself had

Figure 22. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1332. Painting on wood, the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Photo: Fogg Art Museum).

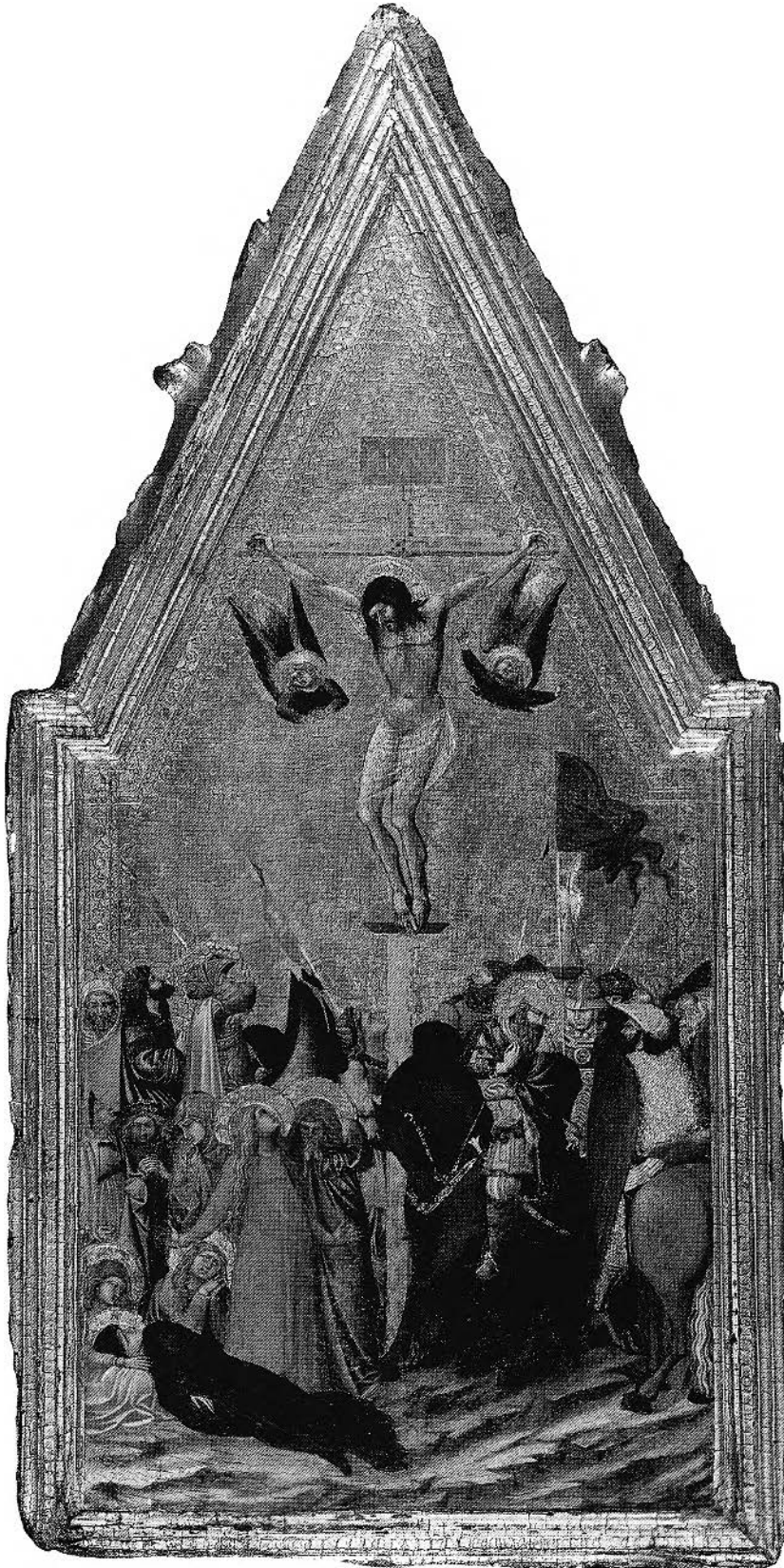


Figure 23. Simone Martini, *Orsini Polyptych*, detail: *Deposition from the Cross*, ca. 1335. Painting on wood, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp (Photo: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten).

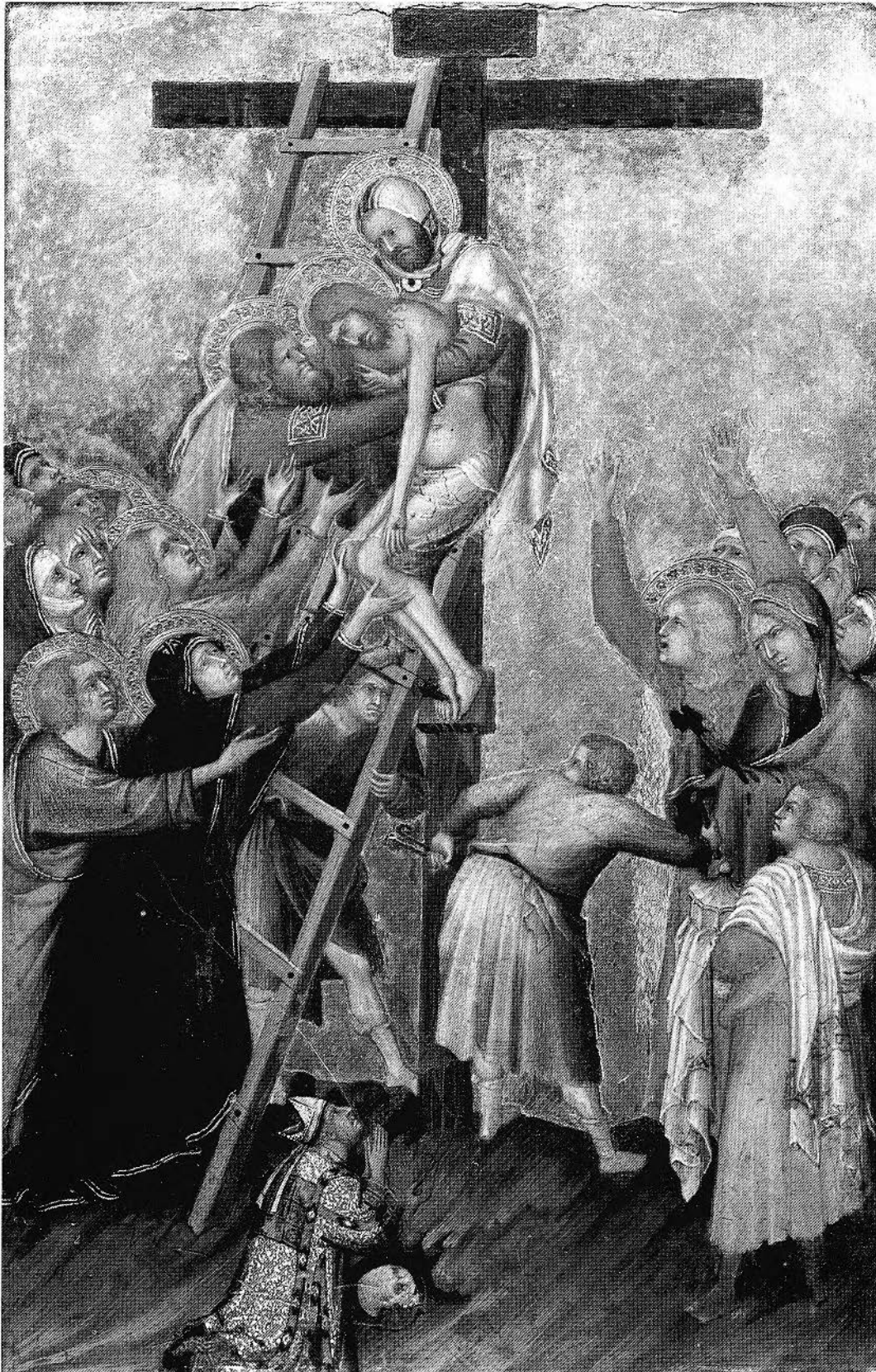


Figure 24. Simone Martini, *Virgil Allegory*, Frontispiece, *Servius' Commentary on Virgil*, later 1330's. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan (Photo: Biblioteca Ambrosiana Slide).

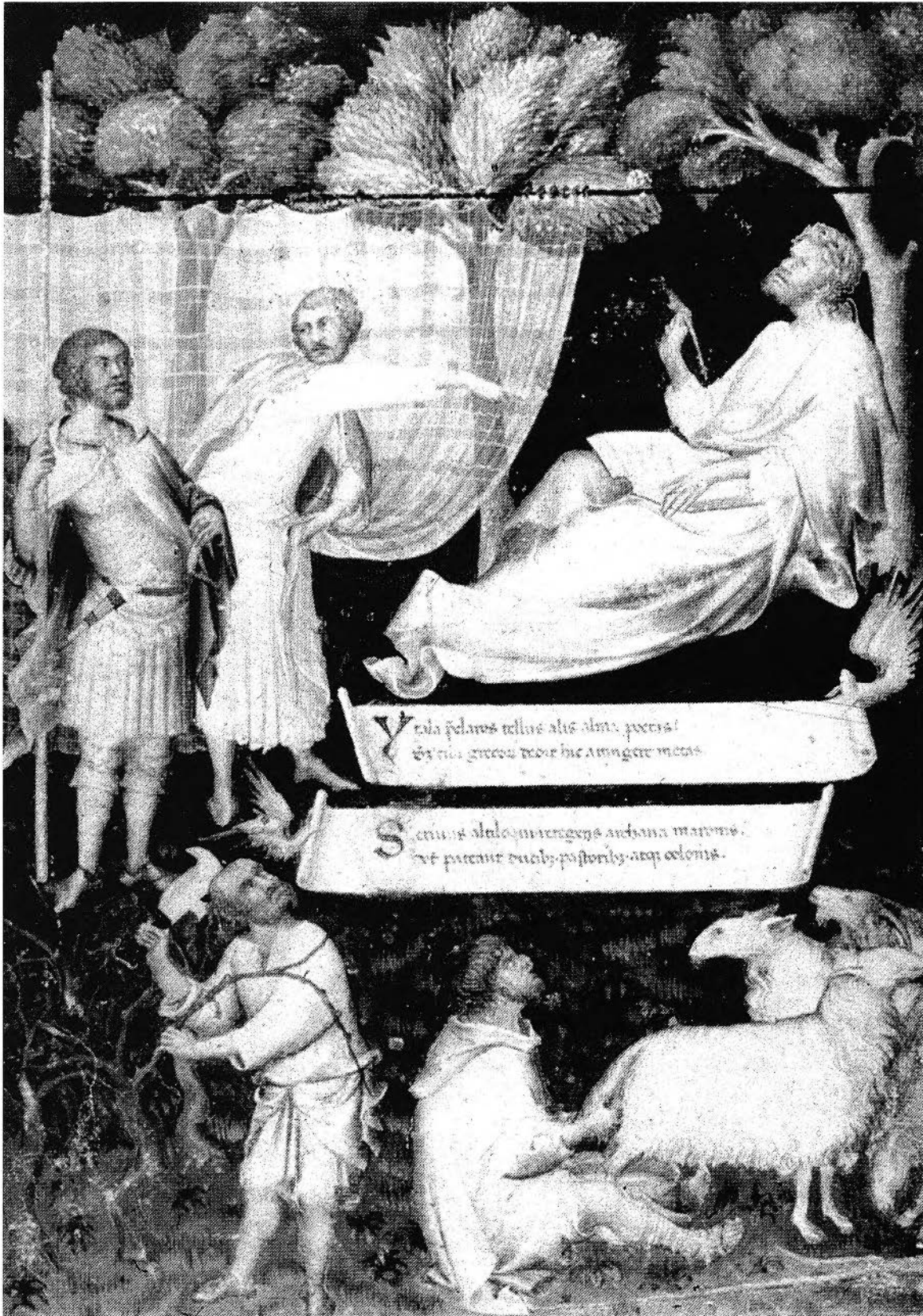
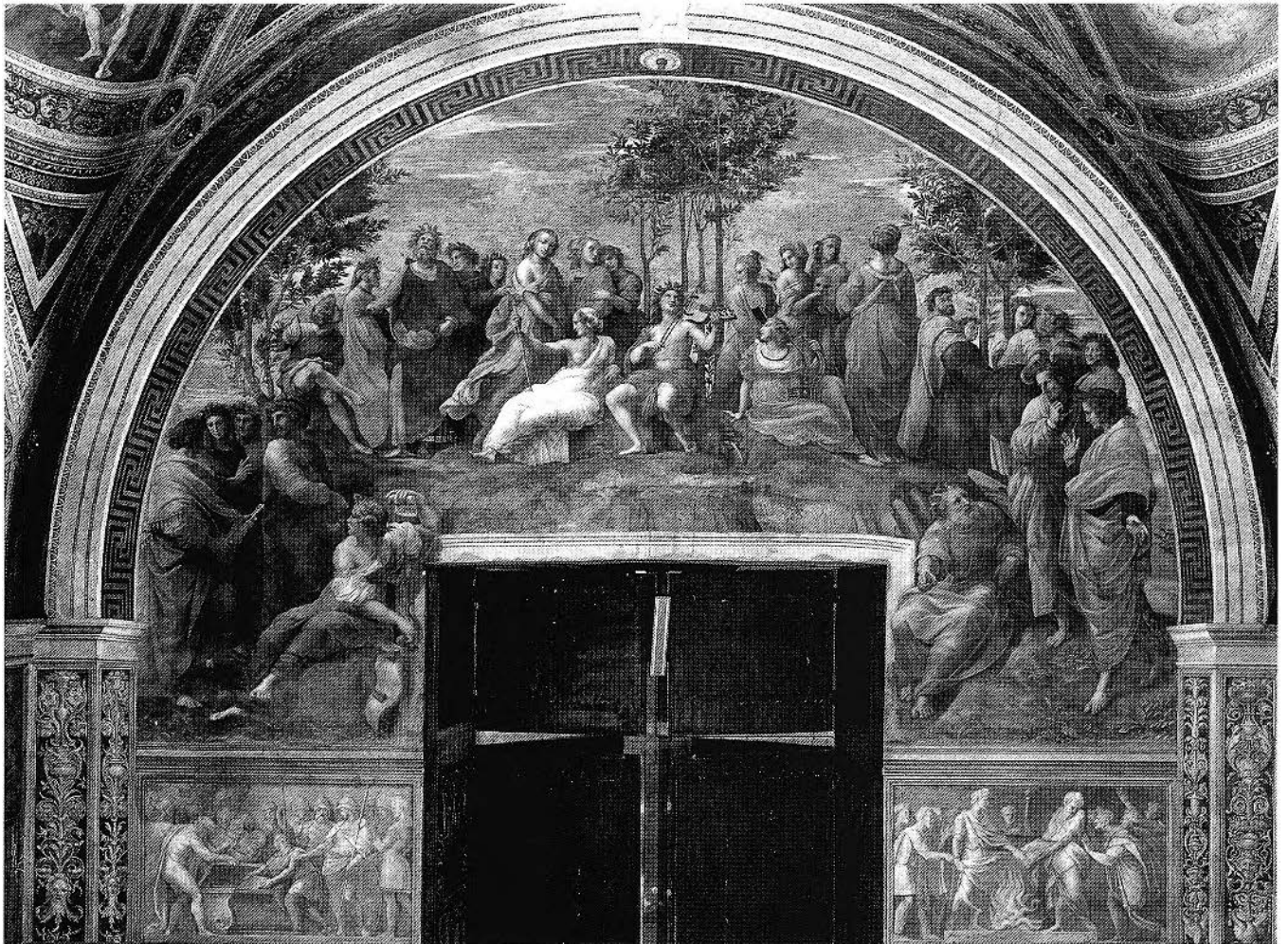


Figure 25. Raphael, *Parnassus*, ca. 1510. Mural painting, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican (Photo: Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie).



still seen the holy nail owned by the Camaldolese community at the Monastery of S. Maria degli Angeli in Florence prior to its suppression in 1868 when it was turned over to the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova. The base of the reliquary offered the following inscription: “*Hic de duodecim clavis factus ab imperatore Constantino ex instigatione B. Helenae, ex uno clavo de tribus clavis D.N.J.C., videlicet de illo distemperato immixto cum tanto ferro ex quanto facti sunt xii clavi ad similitudinem xii apostolorum ex quibus his est unus, qui fuit Napoleonis de Ursinis*” (!). Rohault describes the reliquary as bearing the date 1585, and he states that it was a gift from Cardinal Bessarion to Ambrogio Traversari.⁴⁷ Hearing of this relic and its connection to Napoleone Orsini, Marie Madeleine Gauthier kindly informed me that Clement VI owned a relic of a holy nail in his treasury which is listed in the papal inventory of 1353.⁴⁸ It would seem that it had belonged earlier to Napoleone and later eventually passed to the Camaldolese in Florence. The coincidence of the adora-

tion of holy nails by the cardinal in Simone Martini’s painting lends itself to this interpretation. I should not be surprised if Simone Martini joined the cardinal as a retainer when he settled in Avignon around 1333–35. The fascinating style of the Orsini polyptych and the problems it raises concerning Simone’s role in the Uffizi *Annunciation* of 1333 cannot be considered here in deserved detail.⁴⁹

In the wake of Millard Meiss’ thorough scrutiny of the Virgin of Humility theme – that is, the Virgin seated on the ground who most usually feeds the Christ Child – it has been considered as a more or less closed unit, for the reason that it became a most popular iconographic theme in western European art once it crystallized around 1340 in the circle of Simone Martini. At the core of this theme is the equation of humility – the Virgin’s exemplary virtue, endowing her with the privilege of being the chosen vehicle of God’s incarnation – with the ground. I have tried to place the development of the Virgin of

Humility theme in both a broader and a more detailed evolutionary context. Long before Simone painted his *Virgin of Humility* in Avignon she descends toward the ground in a number of different settings. Even prior to 1300 in the art of southern Italy, and somewhat later in Umbria and Tuscany, the Virgin and St John the Evangelist appear seated on the ground flanking the crucifix. The Virgin Annunciate kneels on the ground in Giotto's Arena Chapel, and some decades later she sits on the ground in Taddeo Gaddi's mural in the Baroncelli Chapel. From the thirties onward she appears seated on the ground with the Christ Child and Joseph in their private chamber. All this was new at the time. And from the later twenties onward, approximately, she sinks to the ground beside the cross in a number of Italian *Crucifixions*, eventually reclining wholly unconscious with her head or upper body supported by the Maries. The intimate analogies of her descent to the ground with the Passion text of the *Meditations*, that influential popular Franciscan devotional treatise written toward the end of the Dugento, suggest a closer connection with prevalent Franciscan thought. Accordingly, when Simone Martini and Bartolommeo da Camogli painted their *Virgins of Humility*, the ground for her appearance had been well cultivated. By then the earth, supporting the salutary virtue of humility, could optionally dismiss its traditional medieval association with evil and the flesh. This change in moral assessment had been brought about gradually by a more positive view of nature as God's benign creation, closely associated with the spirit of St Francis of Assisi.

Miklos Boskovits kindly referred me to a remarkable vision of a Virgin of Humility which occurred in Avignon and is precisely dated in the night of 15 August 1334, preceding the day celebrating her assumption to heaven. Opicinus de Canistris, a scribe at the papal curia, records in his fascinating autobiography that the Virgin seated on the ground and holding the Christ Child on her lap appeared to him in a dream as he was ill, thus strengthening his spirit.⁵⁰ One suspects that this vision was inspired by a work of art.

Around the same time and place Simone Martini painted the exceptional *Allegory* in Servius' *Commentary on Virgil* in the Ambrosian Library in Milan (fig. 24). Here the inspired poet, seated on the ground (!), looks skyward for inspiration as he is about to write in his book. The attendant figures would symbolize his different works: the shepherd the *Eclogues*, the farmer the *Georgics*, and the soldier the *Aeneid*.⁵¹ Servius pulls aside the curtain, thus revealing the inspired Virgil – much like angels, pulling aside curtains, reveal the Virgin and Christ Child in proto-Renaissance art.⁵² Simone Martini's sensualized landscape belongs among the first in the realm of proto-Renaissance painting. The humble pose of the inspired Virgil here seated in nature certainly differed from the ceremonial celebration of

Petrarch's triumph as poet laureate in Rome! This humble pose points forward in time to Apollo, surrounded by the muses and the great literary figures of ancient times and Italy, seated on the ground of Mount Parnassus in Raphael's mural of the Stanza della Segnatura (fig. 25). Powerful ideas often expand beyond their initial confines. Here nature, its evil bias removed, serves as the foundation of man's creative effort.⁵³

Notes

- 1 Giacomo De Nicola observed that a Latin poem, representing the words which the princess addressed to Saint George in the mural of the saint killing the dragon once located in the porch of Notre-Dame-des-Doms, was written by Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi, recorded in his *Codex of Saint George* in the Vatican (Vatican, Archivio di San Pietro, MS no. 129c, 81v and r). Accordingly, Cardinal Stefaneschi was identified with the patron who appears kneeling devotionally before Simone Martini's *Virgin of Humility* located in the tympanum above the entrance (Giacomo De Nicola, "L'affresco di Simon Martini ad Avignone," *L'Arte*, IX (1906), 336–44, with reference to Eugène Müntz, "Les peintures de Simone Martini à Avignon," *Mémoires de la société nationale des antiquaires de France*, 1884, 84ff). Müntz quotes the poem, located beneath Simone's tympanum mural as follows: "Pictoris meraris manus, celeberrimus arte / Memmius (?) hoc magni munere duxit opus / Scilicet Annibalis fuit haec pia dona Secani / Vinis (huius) sex lunae cornua stemma docent." De Nicola observed correctly that this coat-of-arms does not belong to Cardinal de Ceccano, but to Cardinal Stefaneschi. The matter of the patron's identity is complicated because he does not particularly resemble the extant portraits of Jacopo Stefaneschi, particularly those appearing in the *Codex of Saint George*; reproduced in Maria Grazia Ciardi DuPre dal Poggetto, *Il maestro del codice di San Giorgio e il Cardinale Jacopo Stefaneschi* (Florence, 1981), figs. 192 and 194. In the latter the cardinal has a rather elongated head and is delicately featured. Differently, the head of the patron in the mural is quite broad, and the features are rather large. Modern restoration has rendered the patron's head and face more legible.
- 2 Irene Hueck kindly referred me to the codicil of 13 February 1341, which considered the cardinal's will (drawn up in April of 1317) after his death. The codicil has been published in Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *I testamenti dei cardinali del duecento* (Rome, 1980), 459ff. See also Hueck, "Das Datum des Nekrologs für Kardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi im Martyrologium der Vatikanischen Basilika," *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XXI (1977), 219f.
- 3 Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton, N.J., 1951), 132ff; also Henk van Os, *Marias Demut und Verherrlichung in der sienesischen Malerei, 1300–1450* (S'Gravenhage, 1969), 75ff.
- 4 Both versions appear in the *oeuvre* of Giovanni Bellini. Consider, on the one hand, the enthroned Virgin and Christ Child flanked by saints in his grand "sacre conversazioni" in the Churches of

- the Frari and S. Zaccaria, and the one from S. Giobbe in the Accademia, and, on the other, his *Virgin and Child on the Meadow* in the National Gallery, London. High Renaissance art abounded in Madonnas seated or kneeling on the ground, including Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* in the Musée du Louvre, Raphael's *Madonna of the Meadow* in Vienna, Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* in the Uffizi Gallery, etc. Clearly, the Madonna seated in the open with the Christ Child was a preferred theme in the art of Quattrocento Siena; see the examples given in van Os, *Marias Demut*, figs. 68ff.
- 5 W. M. Lindsey, ed., *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* etc. (Oxford 1911), I, X 115.
 - 6 For a survey of the medieval view of humility, see Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena*, and van Os, *Marias Demut*.
 - 7 Hildegard von Bingen, *Liber Scivias*, Wiesbaden, Landesbibliothek, MS 1, pars iii, vis. 8, 178r (reproduced in van Os, *Marias Demut*, fig. 39).
 - 8 See, for example, the *Tree of Virtue* in the *Speculum Virginum*, London, British Museum, MS Arundel 44, 29r (reproduced in van Os, *Marias Demut*, fig. 36).
 - 9 Frate Leone, *Lo specchio di perfezione* (Città del Vaticano, 1965), 28f.
 - 10 Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, ed. F. Bornini (Bari, 1942), 321.
 - 11 Migne, *PL*, CLXXXIII, 58f.
 - 12 Millard Meiss was already fully aware of the fact that the Virgin often sat, knelt or lay on the ground in scenes from her life in early Trecento Italian art, and he offers a number of pertinent examples, including Giotto's kneeling Virgin Annunciate in the Arena Chapel, which he considers the first example of this version in Renaissance art (Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena*, 149f).
 - 13 For a discussion of Taddeo Gaddi's *Annunciation* mural in the Baroncelli Chapel see, conveniently, Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi. Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia, Missouri, and London, 1982), 88f, cat. no. 4, figs. 4b–2 and 3.
 - 14 Eve Borsook, *Gli affreschi di Montesepe* (Florence, 1968), 28ff: "Dentro [a cave connected to the house of Mary] si è la colonna che abbracciò Santa Maria per la paura quando l'angelo l'annunziò ...;" after Fra Niccolò da Poggibonsi, *Libro d'oltremare*, ed. A. Bacchi della Lega (Bologna, 1881), 1.
 - 15 Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena*, 149f.
 - 16 The same text surely influenced, as well, the scene of God sending Gabriel on his Mission which appears in the Arena Chapel above the *Annunciation* at the top of the "triumphal arch;" see Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst* (Gütersloh, 1968), I, 21. Émile Male believed that the same account of God's mission to Gabriel influenced late medieval religious drama; *L'art religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France* (Paris, 1908), 10ff. Regarding the influence of the *Meditations* on proto-Renaissance art in Italy, see also Henry Thode, *Franz von Assisi* (Vienna, 1934), 446ff.
 - 17 "Tandem prudentissima virgo, auditis verbis angeli, consensit, et cum profunda dilectione genuflexa et iunctis manibus dixit: 'Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.' Tunc filius Dei statim totius et sine mora intravit in uterum virginis, et ea carnem assumpsit, et totus remansit in sinu patris;" see *Meditationes devotissimae S. Bonaventurae Card. super totam vitam Domini nostri Iesu Christi* (Venice, 1555), 14. See also R. Green and I. Ragusa, eds and trans., *The Meditations of the Life of Christ* (Princeton, N.J., 1961), 19, after Paris, Bibl. Nat., MS Ital. 115, fol. 12r, which dates from the middle of the Trecento. Interestingly, in this manuscript the Virgin Annunciate is also depicted as kneeling with her arms crossed, accompanied by the text: "come Maria accepta;" *ibid.*, 18.
 - 18 Reproduced in van Os, *Marias Demut*, fig. 16.
 - 19 Reproduced in van Os, *Marias Demut*, fig. 17.
 - 20 A number of other Siennese paintings representing the Virgin seated on the ground in her private chamber are reproduced in van Os, *Marias Demut*.
 - 21 Erling Skaug, "Notes on the Chronology of Ambrogio Lorenzetti and a New Painting from his Shop," *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XX (1976), 301ff: see especially the chart of Ambrogio's motif punches on page 310.
 - 22 A number of examples were on view in the *L'art gothique siennois* exhibition held at the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, on 26 June – 2 Oct. 1983; see *L'art gothique siennois, enluminure, peinture, orfèvrerie, sculpture, Avignon, Musée du Petit Palais, 26 juin – 2 octobre 1983*, exh. cat. (Florence, 1983), 122f, cat. no. 35: the diptych wing close to the Lorenzetti in a private collection in Ancona dating around mid-century; and 262f, cat. no. 98: a panel painting by Niccolò di Buonaccorso in the Musée du Louvre dating ca. 1385. See also the Virgin sewing in her house in Egypt in the *Meditations* manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Green and Ragusa, *Meditations*, 17 and 75).
 - 23 Reproduced in photo Ciganovic 18125, available in the *fototeca* of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence. Irene Hueck kindly referred me to this mural painting.
 - 24 For the Chalice of Benedict IX, see Francesco Santi, "Ritrovamenti di oreficeria medioevale in San Domenico di Perugia," *Bollettino d'Arte*, IX (1955), 3; *idem*, *La Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria* (Rome, 1969), no. 141; also Marie Madeleine Gauthier, *Émaux du moyen age occidental* (Paris, 1972), 389, cat. no. 170. Irene Hueck kindly referred me to this object.
 - 25 In the *Deposition* mural at Assisi the body of Christ rests on the ground beside the fainted Virgin and the figures supporting her. Although now she holds the body of Christ on her lap, the focus on her support by surrounding figures as she is about to faint returns in the *Lamentations* by the Figline Master in the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge and by Botticelli in Munich and Milan.
 - 26 Irene Hueck, "Una Crocifissione su marmo del primo trecento e alcuni smalti senesi," *Antichità Viva*, VIII (1969), 22–34. I find Irene Hueck's explanation more persuasive than Elisabetta Cioni Liserani's recent attempt at dating the marble *Crucifixion* plaque later, around 1320, on the basis of presumed stylistic and iconographic connections with Giotto's shop and Pietro Lorenzetti's Assisi murals; see her "Alcune ipotesi per Guccio di Mannaia," *Prospettiva*, XVII (April 1979), 47–58.
 - 27 Green and Ragusa, *Meditations*, 337.
 - 28 It should not be overlooked that in the medieval Nativity iconography Joseph usually appears seated in reflective thought.
 - 29 Reproduced in Enzo Carli, *Il Duomo di Orvieto* (Rome, 1965),

- plate 51; see also John White's discussion of the facade pier reliefs in "The Reliefs on the Façade of the Duomo of Orvieto," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXII (1959), 254–302.
- 30 Reproduced in Enzo Carli, *Il museo di Pisa* (Pisa 1974), 27f, cat. no. 20, fig. 2a: with bibliography and a dating into the second half of the Trecento, which seems rather late.
- 31 Reproduced in *L'art gothique siennois*, 122f, cat. no. 34.
- 32 *L'art gothique siennois*, 249f, cat. no. 92.
- 33 Reproduced in James Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and his School* (Princeton, N. J., 1979), II, fig. 472. He assigns the panel to a follower of Ugolino.
- 34 It stands to reason that the theme of the fainting Virgin seated or sinking to the ground in scenes of the Passion is influenced by the remarkable popularity, crystallizing around the third quarter of the Dugento, of presenting St Francis, and occasionally other *beati* or saints, as kneeling beside the cross in various expressions of prayer, devotion and sorrow. The kneeling St Francis seems about to kiss Christ's bloody feet on the painted cross in the Church of Santa Chiara at Assisi which has been dated after 16 March 1260; reproduced in Giulia Sinibaldi and Giulia Brunetti, *Pittura italiana del duecento e trecento. Catalogo della mostra giottesca di Firenze del 1937*, 1943 (Florence, 1981), fig. 43a. Eventually this convention was adopted by the Dominicans, as evident in many of Fra Angelico's *Crucifixion* murals in the cells of the Monastery of San Marco in Florence. Broadly considered, it can be assumed that the theme of the kneeling St Francis, adapted to the spirit of Franciscan devotion, was borrowed from the traditional medieval theme of the kneeling magus worshipping the Christ Child, as well as that of the kiss of the foot expressive of total humble subservience, reverting to late Roman and oriental ruler ceremonial. In a religious context it appears on the altar frontal of Henry II in Basel Cathedral where the minuscule emperor and his wife Kunigunde kneel beside the feet of Christ; reproduced in George Zarnecki, *Art of the Medieval World* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., and New York, 1975), 173. An exceptional early image of a kneeling worshipper (plausibly Judith, countess of Flanders) who embraces the foot of the living cross, appears in the *Crucifixion* miniature of the Weingarten Gospels in the Pierpont-Morgan Library in New York, MS 709, fol. iv; reproduced in *ibid.*, colour plate 33.
- 35 Observing the south-eastern corner of the Campo Santo cloister where these two murals meet, it is clearly evident that the plaster layers supporting the *Triumph of Death* lean against those belonging to the *Crucifixion*. Although both murals have been detached from their walls after the fire of November 1944, this can still be discerned directly *in situ*. For a brief account concerning the chronology of these murals, see J. Polzer, "Aspects of the fourteenth-century Iconography of Death and the Plague," in D. Williman, ed., *The Black Death. The Impact of the Fourteenth-Century Plague* (Binghamton, N. Y., 1982), 107–30; in the reproduction of the mural of the *Triumph of Death* my title: "the Master of the Triumph of Death," was changed, without consultation and to my dismay, to read "Francesco Traini" by the editor.
- 36 The Cavallinesque murals in S. Maria Donnaregina are discussed by Émile Bertaux, *Santa Maria di Donnaregina e l'arte senese a Napoli nel secolo xiv* (Naples, 1899); *idem*, "Gli affreschi di S. Maria Donnaregina. Nuovi appunti," *Napoli nobilissima*, XV (1906), 129–32; Gino Chierici, *Il restauro della chiesa di S. Maria di Donnaregina a Napoli* (Naples, 1934); Ersilia Carelli and Stella Casiello, *Santa Maria Donnaregina in Napoli* (Naples, 1975); and Pierluigi Leone de Castris, *Arte di Corte nella Napoli Angioina* (Florence 1986), 286ff. The frescoes must date some time after the completion of the church which took place between 1316 and 1318.
- 37 Simone Martini's Orsini polyptych is discussed by Joel Brink, "Simone Martini's 'Orsini Polyptych,'" *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten* (Antwerp, 1976), 7–24; and Henk Willem van Os and Marjan Rankleff-Reinders, "De reconstructie van Simone Martini's zgn. Polyptiek van de Passie," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek*, XXIII (1972), 13–26.
- 38 Green and Ragusa, *Meditations*, 339.
- 39 From the time of Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Commentari* the *Passion* cycle in the Collegiata of S. Gimignano has been attributed to a certain Barna, but this is certainly not the painter's real name. Barna's presumed authorship of these *Passion* scenes was already questioned by Peleo Bacci, "Il Barna o Berna, pittore della Collegiata di San Gimignano è mai esistito?," *La Balzana*, I (1927), 249–53, and more recently by Janice Hurd, "Lorenzo Ghiberti's Treatise on Sculpture," Ph.D. Dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1970, 206f, and Gordon Moran, "Is the name Barna an incorrect transcription of the name Bartolo?," *Paragone*, no. 311 (Jan. 1976), 76ff. A Sienese document of 1340 mentions a painter named Barna Bertini; see Sebastiana Delogu Ventroni, *Barna da Siena* (Pisa 1972), 9. However, no painting by him is known.
- On the basis of shared style and ornamental practice, the Collegiata *Passion* cycle belongs to the Lippo Memmi ambient. The dating of the mural cycle has also changed in recent years. Placed after the Black Death of 1348, even as late as the sixties of the Trecento, more recently documentary evidence has been found placing them after 1333, when the commune was asked for funds "per fare le pitture" in the Collegiata, and before 1343, a date for their completion given in an eighteenth-century source; see Cristina de Benedictis, "Simone Martini a San Gimignano e una postilla per il possibile Donato," in *Simone Martini e 'chompagni.* Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale, 27 marzo -31 ottobre 1985 (Florence, 1985), 187ff; and Gaudenz Freuler, "Lippo Memmi's New Testament Cycle in the Collegiata in San Gimignano," *Arte cristiana*, no. 713 (marzo-aprile 1986), 93–102, esp. 98f. This is the period when Tederigo, Lippo's brother, who was also a painter, appears in the documents. Both he and Lippo were commissioned in 1344 to paint a triptych for the Ospedale della Scala in Siena – see Peleo Bacci, *Fonti e commenti per la storia dell'arte senese* (Siena, 1943), 181f – and a painting dated 1347 for the Franciscan church in Avignon which they both signed; the signature: "Lippus et Tederigo de Senis Memmii pinxerunt A[n]no Domini MCCCXLVII," is recorded in MS Bib. Vat. lat. Barb. 3055, fol. 169, quoted in Léon-Honoré Labande, *Les primitifs français* (Marseille, 1932), Text, 70. Regarding the different readings: Tederigo or Federigo, of Lippo's

brother's name, see H. B. J. Maginnis, "Chiarimenti documentari: Simone Martini, i Memmi e Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Rivista d'Arte*, ser. IV, LI (1989), 3–23.

There have been recent attempts at considering Lippo Memmi responsible for the production hitherto attributed to Barna, and here to Tederigo, by Antonino Caleca, "Tre polittici di Lippo Memmi. Un'ipotesi sul Barna e la bottega di Simone e Lippo," *Critica d'arte*, XLI (1976), no. 150, 49–59; and XLII (1977), no. 151, 55–80; and Freuler, *op. cit.*, 97ff. A fuller account of why this is not warranted is written but not yet published. In essence, it is impossible to integrate Lippo's mellow style with the powerful drama of the paintings assigned to Tederigo under the umbrella of one artistic personality.

- 40 Green and Ragusa, *Meditations*, 5 and 38f. These children witnessing the Passion are often found in Trecento *Crucifixions*, including Andrea da Firenze's in the Spanish Chapel in Florence. Concerning their meaning, see recently, Joseph Polzer, "Andrea di Bonaiuto's *Via Veritatis* and Dominican Thought in Late Medieval Italy," *The Art Bulletin*, LXXVII (June 1995), 271f.
- 41 Green and Ragusa, *Meditations*, 5.
- 42 The drawing of the lost relief, in the British Museum (cat. no. 1899–6-17-2), is reproduced in Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen 1300–1450* (Berlin, 1969–), I–1, 99ff, III, plate 74a. There it is dated into the fourth decade of the Trecento.
- 43 Skaug, *Notes on the Chronology of Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, esp. 310f and 316. Another many-peopled *Crucifixion* comprising the Virgin lying on the ground, in the Stibbert Museum in Florence, also belongs in the Lorenzetti ambient. It is reproduced in Mojmir Frinta, "Deletions from the Work of Pietro Lorenzetti," *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XX (1976), 280ff, fig. 21 on page 281.
- 44 Mojmir Frinta, "Note on the Punched Decoration of two early Painted Panels at the Fogg Art Museum: *S. Dominic* and the *Crucifixion*," *Art Bulletin*, LIII (1971), 306–9; and Federico Zeri, *Diari di lavoro* (Bergamo, 1971), 20–24.
- 45 "Hinc ascriptis ymagini Neapoleonis ursini cardinalis, quam fecerat insignis pictor Symon Senensis, infrascriptos versus quasi ex oro egredientur, ut oblata ymago Clementi sexto Romano pontifici, cui dictus Neapoleonum phisicum sum, videretur et sibi magistrum Johannem Aretinum commendare. Papa autem visa ymagine sibi oblata suspirans versiculos legit et comendati phisici senis precibus annuit." The poem goes as follows:

"Spes mea dum vixi, nunc spes manifesta bonorum,
Vir michi funereum gratus ad usque thorum

Pro merito mercede caret, gemit ille fidelis.
Cum sibi solamen – nam potes – esse velis,
Poscere, quod presens nequeo, mea poscit ymago
Quotque prius malle, iam tumulatus ago."
(Olmütz Cathedral, MS no. 509, fol. 46).

Quoted in Carl Arnold Willemsen, *Kardinal Napoleon Orsini [1263–1342]* (Berlin, 1927), 199 notes 684f, after Kurt Burdach, "Bericht über Forschungen zur Neuhochdeutschen Schriftsprache." *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophische-historische Abteilung* (1903), 12 note 2.

- 46 Interestingly, the scrutiny of nails removed from Christ's body returns in Fra Angelico's *Descent from the Cross* Altarpiece from the Church of S. Trinità in the Museo di San Marco in Florence.
- 47 Rohault de Fleury, *Mémoire sur les instruments de la passion de N.-S. J.-C.* (Paris, 1870), 171 n. 2 and 175; see also Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie storiche dalle chiese fiorentine* (Florence, 1754–62), VIII, 172; and Lodovico Antonio Giamboni, *Diario sacro e guida perpetua per visitare le chiese... de Firenze etc.* (Florence, 1700), 89.
- 48 Hermann Hoberg ed., *Die Inventare des päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon: 1314–76* (Città del Vaticano, 1944), 157: "Item aliud reliquarium de argento cum 1 clave Ihesu Christi posito in reliquario de crystallo desuper et pede de argento smalhato..." The relic was located in the papal chapel (*ibid.*, 153).
- 49 As I have briefly indicated in "Symon Martini et Lippus Memmi me pinxerunt," in *Simone Martini e 'chompagni*, 167–73, the remarkable difference in figure style separating the Virgin Annunciate in the Uffizi *Annunciation* of 1333 from the one appearing in the Orsini polyptych, considering that the group of motif punches found in these paintings is closely related, has a significant bearing on the question of these painters' respective contributions to the Uffizi *Annunciation* Altarpiece which bears both their names.
- 50 See Richard Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris* (London, 1936), text 32.
- 51 The Virgilian symbolism of this allegory, based on Servius' *Commentary*, is discussed by Joel Brink, "Simone Martini, Francesco Petrarca and the Humanistic Program of the Virgil Frontispiece," *Mediaevalia*, III (1977), 83–116.
- 52 See, for example, the bronze sculptures representing the Virgin and Christ Child enthroned beneath a baldacchino with angels pulling the curtained front aside, situated above the main portal of Orvieto Cathedral; reproduced in John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture* (1955; Oxford, 1986), fig. 31.
- 53 This study is a thoroughly revised version of a paper presented at the *L'art gothique siennois* congress held at Avignon in 1982, whose acts were never published.