

ABSTRACT

Art Object and Holy Image: The Attribution and Contextualization of the *Madonna and Child* by a Follower of Pietro Lorenzetti

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We primarily experience paintings en masse on the walls of museums, yet this greatly limits our experience of the artworks. Collecting and displaying religious art in particular always requires removing the object from the home that imbues it with meaning. This thesis takes the Late Medieval painting of the *Madonna and Child* hanging in the Armstrong Browning Library and places it back within its art historical and liturgical context of fourteenth-century Siena. First, I shall recount the history of Marian devotion in Siena and the stylistic development of altarpieces alongside it. Then I shall describe the painting's identification as a holy image by indicating its lineage to Byzantine icons and by showing what ways the image can be "read" according to contemporary devotion. I will end by showing my connoisseurship research that seeks to identify the anonymous artist and to give a more definite dating to the painting.

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ART OBJECT AND HOLY IMAGE: THE ATTRIBUTION AND
CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE *MADONNA AND CHILD* BY A
FOLLOWER OF PIETRO LORENZETTI

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INTRODUCTION

I first became interested in the intersection between Byzantine icons and Italian panel painting in Dr. Heidi Hornik's first Art History survey course. The semester concluded with Cimabue and Giotto's differing representations of the *Madonna Enthroned* (Figs 1, 2), and I was riveted simultaneously by the ornate, golden striations that illuminated Cimabue's Madonna, and the monumental grandeur of Giotto's. Their splendor contrasted against all of the grey stonework that we had seen throughout the course. Enraptured by their splendorous surfaces, I believe that I was drawn by the dual pull of their aesthetics and their portrayal of the holy.

Less than a year later, Dr. Hornik invited students to participate in a connoisseurship project upon the small collection of Renaissance paintings that had been gifted to the Armstrong Browning Library (ABL) by the Kress Collection in 1964. Dr. Hornik received permission to bring students into the ABL to study the attributions behind pieces of unidentified Italian Renaissance art. This project was intended to give a unique undergraduate experience entailing independent research with hands-on actual art objects and with scholarly access to the ABL curatorial files. The contribution of research from the students benefits the University's understanding of the paintings on campus. Among these paintings there was a badly worn Late Medieval altarpiece of the *Madonna and Child* (Fig. 3). Drawing close to the solemn image of the Mother of God holding the Christ Child, I leapt upon the opportunity to research its provenance, style, and authorship.

Our class soon learned of the trepidations in assuming the role of an art connoisseur. The job of connoisseurship is to provide continuity in the history of art where documentation falls silent. Arguably, since the publishing of Vasari's *Lives of Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, the progression of art has been read as a narrative in which the innovative is valued as the next step in the leading direction of style.¹ Thus, where our knowledge about the chronology of art is incomplete, art historians generally try to patch them by arranging the objects according to the chronology of stylistic progression. Yet this is problematic, since artists do not always create works along a linear stylistic progression. It takes some exploration to come upon a new style, and, sometimes, previous styles are revived. However, the most apparent difficulty lies in recognizing a style. It is ultimately a subjective judgment based upon the experience of the connoisseur's eye. As a novice, I was nearly overwhelmed by the masses of nearly identical, gold-ground polyptychs that I had to wade through before getting my bearings. Eventually I began to develop my own eye for visual comparisons between the sea of Trecento paintings and the *Madonna and Child*.

Examining the Painting

The Kress Foundation online catalog includes a brief description, the known provenance of the object, and a summary of the scholarly attributions made to this painting. Its claims are as follows: The *Madonna and Child* has resided at Baylor University since 1961. It is documented to have come from a church in Siena before

¹ Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 1,2. and, Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in, Clement Greenberg and John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*. vol. 4. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 85-93.

moving to the private collection of Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, in Florence. The Kress Foundation obtained the painting from Count Alessandro's collection in 1931. It has been exhibited only once in "Italian Paintings Lent by Mr. Samuel H. Kress," beginning in October 1932 in Atlanta, Georgia, and ending in June 1935 in Charlotte, North Carolina.² Along with several other Renaissance paintings, the Kress Foundation gave it to the Armstrong Browning Library in 1961.

The altarpiece is 57 inches tall and 29 inches wide. Framed within a red velvet border (that is thought to have been added later) is a painting shaped like a gothic cathedral portal. The Madonna and Christ Child inhabit the larger portion of the panel, and "Christ in heaven" appears in the operculum. A printed chain of six-petal flowers appears along the bottom of the original wooden frame, now irregularly blackened from the scorching stains of past candles lit in prayer. Because of its size and format, this painting is thought to have been the former center of a polyptych.

No other companion pieces of the original composition have been identified, and the object has suffered heavy paint loss. Much of the gold gilding has flaked off, exposing the red bole underneath that was used for binding.³ We assume that the Madonna's greyish robes were once a rich blue, a peculiar aging effect of the blue pigment used in the first half of the fourteenth century. The skin of the figures bears a greenish tinge, indebted to the varying layers of tempera applications.⁴ The Madonna is depicted in a three-quarter length, and the sinuous lines of her robes nuance her elongated

² ABL Curatorial Files

³ Cennino Cennini and Daniel V. Thompson (trans.), *The Craftsman's Handbook* (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), 79.

⁴ Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, 93, 94.

form, like the elegant hands that emerge from the orange cuffs of her sleeves. An aberration in the paint on her shoulder in the shape of a six-pointed star indicates the loss of gold gilding. This star would have signified her identity as the *Stella Maris*, an analogy to her guiding role to the Church.⁵ This title likely arose from a mistranscription of Jerome's translation of her Hebrew name, "Miryam," which was originally rendered "stilla maris" in Latin.⁶ As "stella maris," her title became known as "star of the sea," the one who leads the Church to Christ just as the North Star guides a ship home.⁷ Her brow is adorned by the blue *maphorion* inherited from Byzantine depictions, complemented by the blonde curls that fall out from underneath, and the white silk with gold-trim undergarment that is an Italian addition to the Marian type.⁸ Her neck supports a graceful head that turns down so that her face is drawn nearer to the Child's.

Their lips that nearly brush communicate an intimate gesture between the Mother and Child. Dressed in orange robes, the Christ Child's head sports rolling blonde curls that fall back as he reaches up towards his Mother's face, imploring her affection. With his right hand he reaches around to grasp the Virgin's shoulder, and the other rests under

⁵ Arthur De Bles, *How to Distinguish the Saints in Art by Their Costumes, Symbols, and Attributes* (New York: Art Culture, 1925), 46.

⁶ "The Name of Mary - Encyclopedia Volume - Catholic Encyclopedia." *Catholic Online*. Accessed April 29, 2017.
<<http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=7668>.>

⁷ Brian K. Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven: Marian Doctrine and Devotion, Image and Typology in the Patristic and Medieval Periods*. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 133. The connection to the identity of the *Stella Maris* was strengthened by the popular hymn *Ave Maris Stella*.

⁸ Jaroslav Folda and Lucy Wrapson, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child Hodegetria and the Art of Chrysography* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 226-230.

her neck. Face plump with child-like juvenescence, he could easily be mistaken for an ordinary child were it not for the imposing figure of the Madonna. It is also worth noting that the same flower punch motif in the border of the frame appears in the Child's halo. Above in the pinnacle of the panel, Christ's eternal form is seen from a frontal pose, eyes lidded, and holding a book that, if it were open, would display the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega*, identifying him as the beginning and end of the world.

Expanding Research Questions

Concurrent with my experience in the role of a connoisseur, I began to study the literature and theology that fed the cultural milieu surrounding the altarpiece. Both Dr. David Lyle Jeffrey and Dr. Junius Johnson's courses proved invaluable to my accumulating knowledge of the Middle Ages. I became increasingly interested in the Orthodox tradition of the Byzantine icon. Since the Italian altarpieces were derived from Byzantine examples, on what grounds did they feel free to invent upon the traditional image of The Virgin and Christ, and how did their departure become the launching point into the High Renaissance pursuit of naturalism? How did the images' audience react to these changes, and how did this reflect shifting styles of devotion? Dr. Hornik soon began assigning thesis readings by Umberto Eco and Jaroslav Pelikan that caused me to also question whether it was the written theology of the times or the evolving images themselves that were determining the course of Western Christian worship.⁹

⁹ Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven; London: Yale Nota Bene, 2002), and Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998).

These larger questions always remained rooted in my experience of working with the altarpanel in the Armstrong Browning Library. There are more hypothetical than definitive answers to these broad ponderings on the course of Western Church art, yet the image in the ABL continued to demand investigation. Medieval images retain their fascination because they represent a theology that was accessible to an entire congregation, rather than the sole elite and scholars.¹⁰ The Trecento altarpanel provides a fascinating subject as a player in the stylistic transition from the Byzantine icon to Renaissance painting and as a text to be read according to the scriptures. In my thesis I seek to understand what the representation of divinity in the painting of the *Madonna and Child* bore for its particular cultural and artistic context.

This thesis aims to provide a thorough art historical analysis of the *Madonna and Child*, encompassing a stylistic and cultural account for the work that articulates its religious context within the fourteenth-century Western Church. It is divided into three chapters that restore the altarpanel of the *Madonna and Child* to its artistic, cultural and religious milieu. The first chapter will situate the painting within its artistic and historical context in the narrative of Siena that leads up to the fourteenth century. From this vantage point, I will then discuss, in depth, the panel painting's liturgical context by distinguishing it from its predecessor, the a Byzantine icon, and by exploring how a Late Medieval layperson might have understood this projection of the Mother of God and the Christ Child. The final chapter relates the research of my connoisseurship project and what discoveries have been made since the original term.

¹⁰ Margaret R. Miles, "Achieving the Christian Body: Visual Incentives to Imitation of Christ in the Christian West," in, Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Interpreting Christian Art: Reflections on Christian Art* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press), 2003, 1.

CHAPTER ONE

The City of Siena and The Virgin

We shall begin by replacing the Trecento altarpiece amidst its fourteenth-century Sienese historical and artistic contexts. The first approach of my connoisseurship project was to familiarize myself with the Late Medieval culture that produced the *Madonna and Child*. An understanding of the Trecento cultural milieu answers the question of who commissioned this altarpiece and it allows us to establish visual and ideological connections with close precedents. All of the artworks that we shall be examining were commissioned for religious purposes. However, there was no clear distinction between church and state governance in the Middle Ages, and these works were usually commissioned through a combination of Church and civic funds.

Western Christianity pervaded all aspects of Italian life. In the fourteenth century the commune of Siena declared the Virgin Mary as their patron protector, and Sienese artists' depictions of her became influential throughout all central Italian painting. The most prominent form of these images was the *hodegetria*, a term coined for any image type that depicts the Virgin holding the Christ Child. Revered images of the Madonna and Child *hodegetria* were heavily affected by the prevalent mode of Franciscan devotion. First, we shall recount the nature of civic Marian devotion that was particular to Late Medieval Siena, and then we shall discuss the development of the Marian altarpieces. We shall conclude by placing Pietro Lorenzetti (c.1280—1348) at the head of this artistic development.

Sieneſe Devotion to the Virgin

Traditionally, the battle of Montaperti, September 1260, is recognized as the cause of civic Marian devotion in Siena. The legend tells of the battle in which the Virgin interceded on behalf of the city and, although the historicity of it is debated, is repeated by fourteenth- and fifteenth-century historians.¹ Late Medieval Italy was not a united country, but instead it was divided into several warring city-states governed by rich nobles and clerics. Each desired to expand their territories in order to gather more resources and to draw wealth to their capital. Florence had amassed an intimidating army that marched to Siena and demanded their surrender. In a Roman Republican fashion, the city council elected the prominent citizen Buonaguida Lucari as their active leader during the crisis.²

The clergy began to pray and process around the city's cathedral, pleading with the Virgin and Saints to intervene. Lucari made a great public gesture of asking the Virgin for intercession as well, and demanded that the citizens give their possessions to the Virgin as votive participation before joining the clergy in procession through the streets and into the cathedral.³ The bishop then led Lucari before the altar where he met an image of the Virgin and to whom he commended the keys of the city. Prayers and pleas for intercession from the Virgin continued into the next day, upon which the troops marched under a white banner representing the cloak of the Virgin. It was said that a

¹ Gerald Parsons, *Siena, Civil Religion, and the Sieneſe* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 3.

² Ibid., 4.

³ Ibid., 4.

white cloud among them marked her favor.⁴ On the following day, the Sienese army struck a devastating defeat upon the Florentines, rendering them incapable of retaliation. From then on the city devoted itself as a continual votive to the Virgin Mary.

Scholars today question whether this event is the true origin of the dominant Marian devotion of Late Medieval Siena. The historicity of this account of the battle is questioned, for even though the legend of Montaperti relies upon thirteenth-century source material, the earliest written account of the battle was made in the fourteenth century (1361), nearly a century after it occurred.⁵ We must acknowledge that the Sienese army won the battle of Montaperti by the aid of an assisting German cavalry as well.⁶ However, due to the agreeing accounts of multiple sources, there must have been some notable votive gesture to the Virgin for intercession. Also, there was a substantial Marian devotion already in full swing in Siena by 1260. The city's cathedral and altar were dedicated to the Virgin in the tenth century, the bishop mentions her as "*Signoria Regina Nostra*" in a document from 1215, and the Assumption of the Virgin was recorded as the commune's most highly attended feast day.⁷ The procession held upon this feast day included a dedication of candles and rituals to the Virgin that marked the commune's

⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Bridget Heal, "Civitas Virginis"? The significance of civic dedication to the Virgin for the development of Marian imagery in Siena before 1311," in, *Art, Politics, and Civic Religion in Central Italy, 1261-1352: Essays by Postgraduate Students at the Courtauld Institute of Art* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 2000), 297.

⁷ Parsons, *Civil Religion*, 1.

resubmission to the state of Siena.⁸ Also, she had begun to appear as a national symbol on the city seal in 1250—enthroned with the Christ Child and flanked by angels.⁹

The already deep-rooted Marian devotion in Siena was certainly confirmed and propelled by the battle of Montaperti. The year 1260 was not the starting point for Marian devotion in Siena, which reaches back indefinitely into the years before the thirteenth century, but primary sources reflect that the battle did reignite civic devotion to the Virgin that flourished in the succeeding century. As evinced by the fourteenth-century Sienese historians who look back at Montaperti through a rose-tinted lens, the battle became an enduring communal memory of Sienese civic pride. Following the victory the commemorative “*Civitas Virginis*” was added to the city seal. It may be impossible to know what elements of the story actually occurred, but it would be surprising to find that no votive gesture for intercession was made to the Virgin at all. In particular, I would draw our attention to the legend’s account of the giving of the keys of the city to the Virgin. The keys are presented before an image of the Virgin at the altar which, a later embellishment or not, evinces the significance of holy images of the Virgin to the Late Medieval Sienese.

The original painting from the battle of Montaperti is usually recognized as the *Madonna degli occhi grossi*, c. 1225 (Fig. 4).¹⁰ This image is little over 3 feet tall and 2 feet wide and painted with egg tempera and gold-ground on wooden panel. It depicts the

⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹ Heal, “*Civitas Virginis*?” 296.

¹⁰ Gianna A. Mina, “Coppo di Marcovaldo’s *Madonna del Bordone*: political statement or profession of faith?” in *Art, Politics, and Civic Religion in Central Italy, 1261-1352: Essays by Postgraduate Students at the Courtauld Institute of Art* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 2000), 247.

formal *hodegetria* image type, with the Virgin holding the Christ Child in her lap. Two flying angels flank the upper corners of the painting, and she is seated upon a backed, short chair. Stylistically it is rather primitive: the figures are frontal, disproportionate, and stiffly arranged. The Madonna's halo breaks the confines of the frame and the Child is contained well within her silhouette. Despite what role it may have played in the salvation of Siena, it was probably replaced during an extensive adornment of the cathedral, along with the addition of a sculpted pulpit, a new altar, and choir.¹¹

As time went on, the successive replacement of images for the altar of the Siena Cathedral became increasingly naturalistic in style and elaborate in form. The *Madonna del Voto* (Fig. 5), commissioned in the year following the triumph of 1260, replaced the *occhi grossi* at the altar. It is slightly larger, standing roughly 4 feet tall and 2.6 feet wide. This *hodegetria* follows several of the formal characteristics that imitate the Byzantine style. Although much more linear, composing its figures from geometric forms and modeling them through sunburst drapery, it also introduces a more naturalistic gesture of intimacy between the Madonna and Child. The Mother holds the Child to her left side, supporting his weight with one hand while gesturing towards Him with the other. The Child is no longer contained within the Madonna's silhouette, as the two turn in towards one another. Long venerated in the city's central cathedral, it too was eventually eclipsed by a more decorous painting.

Duccio's *Maestà* marked the growing popularity of Marian images in Siena (Fig. 6). Upon its completion, this massive polyptych was processed through the streets of Siena, from the workshop to the cathedral. The work is nearly 7 feet tall and 13 feet wide.

¹¹ Diana Norman. *Siena and the Virgin: Art and Politics in a Late Medieval City State* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), 34, 35.

The front of the panel displays the heavenly magisterium: A full-length *hodegetria* flanked by the angels and saints (Fig. 7). The back of the altarpiece depicts multiple narratives from the Passion, and thus must have been intended to stand in the round. The artist and commissioner thus conceived the panel to sit at the transept of a cathedral, rather than with its back against the wall. Duccio's work is often credited as the stylistic bridge of Marian images from the Byzantine style into a distinctly Italian form.

These extravagant gold-ground altarpieces of the Madonna and Child are indebted to the Byzantine icon tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church (See Fig. 8 for an example of a Byzantine icon housed in Siena). Although it is natural to find Byzantine influences in the aesthetic of early Italian altarpieces, there is no evidence of any Eastern Orthodox effect on Western liturgy.¹² Byzantine icons functioned to mediate the presence of the divine, and their veneration was an essential element to participation in the Orthodox service.¹³ The Italian altarpieces may have been miracle-working at times, but they were primarily seen as contemplative backdrops for the serving of the Western mass. Both were meditative items meant to convey theological truths and to bring the layperson into intimate contact with the divine. Further discussion upon the devotional function of the Italian altarpiece shall come in chapter two. For the present, we are concerned with the scholarship upon the stylistic transition of painting from the East to the West.

¹² Jacob Burckhardt and Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 42.

¹³ Jaroslav Folda and Lucy Wrapson, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child Hodegetria and the Art of Chrysography* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1.

One promising lead lies in the study of Crusader icons, the paintings made by Western artists encountering the Byzantine icons in Constantinople during the later crusades of the thirteenth centuries. The original *hodegetria* icon, that the Church believed was painted by St. Luke, was housed at Constantinople and was venerated already for its intimate connection to the vision of the Virgin and the patron saint of artists.¹⁴ The name *hodegetria* comes from the name of the monastery (*Hodegon*) in which it was housed, and the type depicts the seated Virgin holding the Christ Child in her lap in order to show the viewer “the way” to holiness through Him. The reverence surrounding this particular image and the Eastern reverence towards the icons was striking to the Western Christians, prompting Catholic bishops and other private patrons to begin to commission their own icons in the Byzantine style. These “Crusader icons” imitate well-known Byzantine originals, but they tend to deviate upon styles of figural modeling.¹⁵

As these artists and their works made their way around the Mediterranean and back into Italy, the splendor of the Byzantine icon still held sway. Western painters well versed with the slender figures of the High Gothic style adopted the gold ground background, geometric forms, and modeling derived from the Eastern *chrysography*. As we have seen in Siena, one of the most popular types that took hold was the *hodegetria* Madonna and Child type. The Sienese fourteenth-century style was perceived as utilizing

¹⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16. Folda’s book focuses primarily upon the Western experimentation with the Byzantine *chrysography*, the Byzantine technique of modeling holy figures with gold highlights so as to depict radiance coming from within them. This slowly transformed into the “sunburst drapery” familiar to those who study Cimabue’s *Madonna Enthroned*, which uses the golden striation to depict exterior light striking the figures.

the beauty and tradition of the Byzantine icon but matched with a distinctly Italian style. Italian religious art began to more notably depart from the Byzantine tradition when artists, like Duccio, began to render more naturalistic figures. This stylistic trend is often seen as symptomatic of a humanizing devotional trend in the Catholic Church.

The Franciscan Order

St. Francis was a charismatic Church revivalist whose activity is dated to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. He experienced several miraculous visions, most notably receiving the stigmata, and preached on submission to a literal understanding of Christ's teachings. His following held Humility, Simplicity, Poverty, and Prayer as core teachings and marks of the Order. The Order was founded c. 1210, and spread across Europe in the second half of the thirteenth century. Although they were popular, the Order's assumption of priestly rites like confession and the burial of the dead clashed with the Church's institutional authority.¹⁶ The Order was also slow to adopt a model for education, which brought them into conflict with the Universities and the Church. Once they submitted to the authority of parish officials, the Order began to then be assumed into the wider Catholic Church. The friars became an essential proponent of the Church in their relation and service to the poor.

The Franciscan Order also made a lasting impact upon the Church through its mysticism. St. Francis set an example of experiencing powerful visions through devotion to the person of Christ and personal self-identification with His suffering.¹⁷ This

¹⁶ John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from Its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968), 177.

¹⁷ Ibid., 256.

mysticism entailed entering into severe poverty while also bearing a personal understanding of Christ's Passion emotionally. The historical facts of Christ's life were interpreted through human feelings and emotion.¹⁸ This did not replace the communal faith in which the friars lived through communal poverty, but it did offer a new personal connection for the layperson to their Savior. The circulation of popular written devotionals like the *Imitation of the Life of Christ*, which turned towards emotional contemplation upon the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, propelled the spread of this mode of affectual devotion.¹⁹ The affection and humanization of the Incarnation clearly affected the artwork emerging from the thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries.

Franciscan devotion was marked by its attempt to make an intense emotional relation to the gospel, the suffering of Christ, and the joy of the Resurrection. The devotee was placed within reality with the story of the gospel, experiencing all of the essential narratives alongside Christ. Following this devotion, the visual arts began to similarly strive for presenting the Incarnation in a more immediate reality to the devotee.²⁰ Alongside this growing desire for human relation to God painting became more humanized, or naturalistic, in the depiction of religious subjects. Gestures became more graceful, stiff forms were replaced by slender and softened figures, and greater attention was paid to environmental details. As a result, figures became more modeled

¹⁸ Ibid., 256.

¹⁹ Margaret R. Miles, "Achieving the Christian Body: Visual Incentives to Imitation of Christ in the Christian West," in, Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Interpreting Christian Art: Reflections on Christian Art* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 6.

²⁰ Margaret R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 72.

and more effort was put into adding convincing details to clothing or the setting around a character.²¹ It is difficult to say whether patrons or artists determined this trend, but in either case it appears to be what churches were expecting in the thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries.

We have already spoken at length about the Marian images commissioned for the Cathedral of Siena. Duccio's grand *Maestà* did not develop in isolation, and it was accompanied by Marian commissions in the "secular" realm. Previous *hodegetria* had been painted for governmental offices, like Simone Martini's *Maestà* (1315-21) fresco that lines the wall of the Palazzo Pubblico (Fig. 9). Simone was a follower of Duccio, and although his style tends more towards the French Gothic influence his composition of saints arranged around the enthroned Madonna and Child is determined by Duccio's masterpiece. Thus, civic offices were decorated similarly and nearly as elaborately as the religious center of the city.

The Trecento patronage for the arts thus came from both the secular and the religious institutions. Such large pieces as we have discussed would have been commissioned by communities (not individuals), and we have seen how religious devotion was by extent civic devotion through the Virgin. Alongside the bishops and government councils that desired great works of art, there rose a third party in the fourteenth century—lay orders and confraternities. The Franciscan Order was incredibly popular throughout Europe, and within Siena there was a Servite Order specifically dedicated to the Virgin Mary.²² It is therefore appropriate to draw a correlation between

²¹ Miles, "Achieving the Christian Body," 11.

²² Mina, "Coppo di Marcovaldo's Madonna del Bordone," 237.

the affectual faith of popular lay orders and the stylistic changes in painting for fourteenth-century Siena.

Pietro Lorenzetti

Little is definitively known about Pietro Lorenzetti's biography, and most of what we know is based upon records of his commissions and signed pieces. He was most likely born in central Italy c. 1280 or 1285. The first mention of his activity is recorded in 1306, when he painted over a picture for the Signoria.²³ His brother Ambrogio was also an accomplished painter, and although they may have collaborated on some projects, it appears that they operated within joint or distinct workshops. Per convention, painting was the Lorenzetti family trade. However, both brothers were skilled enough to be commissioned for their own exclusive projects. The known activity of the brothers ceases after the middle of the century, and it is believed that they perished in the Black Plague of 1348. The Lorenzetti were students of Duccio, and they both deviated from his style in their respective ways.

There are four authoritative works surviving by Pietro Lorenzetti. His earliest work of definite attribution is the *Arezzo Polyptych* (Fig. 10), whose record of commission notes the project's initiation on April 17, 1320 by the local bishop Guido Tarlati for the altar of the church of Arezzo.²⁴ Now divided amongst several collections,

²³ "Pietro Lorenzetti." *Oxford Art Online. Benezit Dictionary of Artists* [accessed April 28, 2015]
http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00111629?q=Pietro+Lorenzetti&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1 .

²⁴ Hayden B.J. Maginnis, "Pietro Lorenzetti: A Chronology," *Art Bulletin* 66, no. 2 (June 1984): 184.

Pietro's next definitive work is the *Carmelite Polyptych* dated to 1329 (Fig. 11). It was commissioned by the local Carmelite Order and was designed to assert their lineage to Elijah and Elisha.²⁵ His first known signed and dated work is the *Madonna and Child with Angels*, now known as the *Uffizi Madonna*, and inscribed with the year 1340 (Fig. 12). This probably marks the year in which it was completed. One of his most often mentioned works is the *Birth of the Virgin* altarpiece, signed and dated to 1342, and painted for the Siena cathedral (Fig. 13). It is one of the most notable interior depictions of the Trecento as it hints at the innovative use of orthogonals and the development of one-point linear perspective. A final important, yet non-surviving work is the fresco painted for the Siena Hospital in 1335. Both Pietro and Ambrogio were commissioned, and this is the one record of the brothers collaborating on a single project.

The numerous frescoes in the church of San Francesco of Assisi have intrigued scholars for many years. Their authorship is highly debated, and even Vasari misattributed Pietro's hand in them to Giotto. Today the lower church transept frescoes of the Passion narrative are attributed to Pietro and his assistants' hands (Fig. 14). Maginnis makes a thorough and convincing historical and stylistic case for why these frescoes were probably finished prior to 1320.²⁶ It is believed that Pietro was here exposed to the work of many other artists collaborating on the San Francesco frescoes. Pietro's style is usually characterized as being reminiscent of Ducciesque forms, austere, and emotive. One could see how these traits might have been established by working extensively upon the Passion Cycle frescoes.

²⁵ Ibid., 187.

²⁶ Ibid., 208.

Scholars agree that Pietro must have been commanding assistants to complete the frescoes, and he certainly led a workshop to create his panel paintings. There is variation in stylistic quality throughout the Assisi frescoes, but exactly how the labor was divided between master and pupil is still undecided. Most likely, the master artist painted the central figures and the lesser figures were allotted to assistants. This hypothesis is also applied to the painting of the altarpanel. The skilled painter was probably chosen to paint important focal points, possibly entire central figures or perhaps just the hands and the faces. Workshop assistants probably painted large fields of background color or drapery. The case for attribution to a workshop assistant will be further discussed in the chapter three.

Our altarpanel can be stylistically compared to the first half of Pietro's career, and the case for attribution and dating will be established in the final chapter. We have seen the importance of devotion to the Virgin in Siena, and Duccio's *Maestà* that was produced out of an intensified devotion to the Mother of God. His majestic altarpanel would continue to affect and inspire succeeding Siennese artists, like Pietro. The style of these paintings was preceded by the Byzantine *hodegetria* icon tradition, and would be propelled towards naturalism by a humanized shift in devotion in the Western Church. Before we continue to our discussion of connoisseurship and technical details of our altarpanel, we must first discuss the theological function that the painting bore to the Late Medieval layperson.

CHAPTER 2

The Altarpanel as an Object of Devotion

In this chapter I will discuss the theological function of the altarpanel. Although now hung in a library, as a large artistic object that would have been placed upon an altar in a Late Medieval Church, we must consider the religious context of the painting in order to situate its place within Western culture.¹ Understanding what this object meant to its contemporary world requires more than an artistic analysis. We have already noted the Virgin's significance to the commune of Siena, but we must also acquaint ourselves with the themes of influential theologians and sermons that would have determined the Late Medieval attitude towards the Mother of God. Designed as an object of devotion, the painting's primary purpose is to communicate holiness to the viewer. It would have served as a point of focus for the celebration of the mass and as an object of contemplation for its participants. The Madonna and Child's gestures and appearance would have heightened the immediacy of their depiction, and the composition evokes an erotic reading from the Canticles. In order to better account for the tradition of holy images used in the Church liturgy, I shall rely upon the development of the altarpanel's artistic ancestor, the Byzantine icon.

¹ Margaret R. Miles, "Achieving the Christian Body: Visual Incentives to Imitation of Christ in the Christian West," in, Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Interpreting Christian Art: Reflections on Christian Art* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press), 2003, 18-23. Miles argues that our twenty-first-century consumerist society is not adequately prepared to engage with the spiritualism of Medieval Christian art.

First I will distinguish the Trecento Italian altarpiece from the Byzantine icon, then I shall clarify how the painting was involved in fourteenth-century Catholic Church practice. I shall then try to account for how the medieval layperson would have identified with the painting by discussing elements of Marian devotion that were common to the fourteenth century and what scriptures their depiction brings to mind. Although there are clearly stylistic differences between the Italian gold-ground painting and the Byzantine icon, we must also consider their differing devotional functions. For the purposes of this thesis, I shall brush lightly upon the liturgical function of the Eastern Orthodox icons only in so far as to contrast it against that of the Western altarpiece. Although they visibly differ by the thirteenth century, both types of works share their origin in the holy image of the *hodegetria*.

The Early Christian Origin of Holy Images

The tradition of making holy images in the Church has two origins. The Western Medieval Church treasured the legend of the Veil of Veronica, in which St. Veronica wiped the sweat from Christ's face while he carried the cross.² The imprint of the sweat that stained the cloth effectively created the first image of Christ. A similar tradition is held in the East with the Byzantine Mandylion.³ Yet the first painting of Christ is usually credited to St. Luke. He recorded the first image of the Virgin and Child from a mystical

² For further explanation upon the devotion to Veronica's Veil and its artistic interpretations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries see Alexa Sand, "Chapter One Saving Face: The Veronica and the Visio Dei," in, *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (New York, US: Cambridge University Press, 2014). 30-81, and, Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before The Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). 220-224.

³ Sand, "The Veronica and the Visio Dei," 33.

vision of the *hodegetria*, and this “original icon” was presented to Eudocia, wife of Emperor Theodosius II, upon her pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁴ This image would become the prototype for all later images of the Mother of God and the Christ Child, and the story of its creation warranted the further creation of paintings and carvings of the holy figures.

Early Christian concern over the fine distinction between images and idols led to a development of purpose for images in the Church. Pope Gregory the Great can be credited with one of the first authoritative iconodulist stances of the Church. In letters responding to an image-weary bishop, Pope Gregory claims that images are to be decorous and for the instruction of the illiterate.⁵ Iconoclasts resisted the attempts to depict an incorporeal God, aware of the human incapacity to grasp Him, and suspicious of the distractions of human craftsmanship that might lead the worshipper into idolatry. St. John of Damascus replied to the eighth-century iconoclastic surge with an articulate theology of the image. He explains that God could be depicted after the Incarnation, when he appeared as man, and distinguishes between the worship of the image itself (which is idolatry) and worship through the image of the person typified.⁶ Therefore, in picturing Christ the holy image becomes a proof for the story of the gospels, which claim

⁴ Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons. *Illuminating Luke: The Infancy Narrative in Italian Renaissance Painting [1]* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2003). 14-16.

⁵ “Gregory the Great, *Letter to Serenus, Bishop of Massilia*, c.600,” New Advent. March 5, 2017. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360211013.htm>>.

⁶ Frederic Henry Chase (trans.), *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, vol. 37 (New York, 2015), 371-373.

that God descended to Earth in order to assume a corporeal form.⁷ The Second Council of Nicea shortly thereafter affirmed this philosophical claim in 787.⁸

This serious deliberation over the suitability of images for Christian worship in the East also gave birth to the beginnings of a distinct form of painting, now known as the Byzantine style. The fact that Christ could be depicted in an image evinced that God had appeared in the physical form of a human, and the icon was intimately bound to the worship of the person of Christ. The Orthodox Church today has received a tradition of figuring Christ and the saints consistently, rather than through inventive experimentation. Although hordes of early icons have been catalogued from the Monastery of Mount Sinai, there is no document detailing instructions upon writing icons that dates back to the Early Church.⁹ Therefore, it is appropriate to describe the icons through their general characteristics.

The Altarpanel: A Kin of the Byzantine Icon

The Byzantine painterly style is intentionally non-naturalistic (See Fig. 8 for an example of a Byzantine icon brought to Siena in the thirteenth century). The Byzantine Empire did not lose its ability to produce classical aesthetics, for they survived upon art

⁷ Michel Quenot, *The Resurrection and the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 48.

⁸ Norman P. Tanner, Giuseppe Alberigo, J. A. Dossetti, and Periclis-Petros Ioannou. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington (D.C.): Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:133-137.

⁹ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 18, 25.

forms that were not designated for use in the Church.¹⁰ The Eastern Church's high stylization of the figures in the icons was not for want of skill, but for the express purpose of communication in the context of the Church. Arguably, this style does not sacrifice its beauty either. However, the icon's first purpose is to aid the viewer in worship by mediating divine persons and theological realities. It intentionally does not concern itself with sensual or tactile details, seeking instead to mediate a divine person through form and symbol.¹¹ As a result, the viewer is chiefly aware that they are encountering an image of a divine figure, without their attention straying to admire its virtuosity, when gazing upon an icon. The eye is less preoccupied with how beautiful the subject appears and more concerned with the identity of the figure.¹²

The Italian Ducento and Trecento paintings, in contrast, were more concerned with an affective experience. Retrospectively knowing that increased interest in naturalism would follow in the fifteenth century, the Sienese Trecento's stylistic drift from the Byzantine tradition seems dramatic. What was a relatively rigid formula for reproducing images in the East was taken as a launching point for experimentation in the West. The Ducento and Trecento Italian painters strove to depict divine figures that were both physically and theologically riveting. The fourteenth-century Italianate arts also tried to communicate to the devotee through an emphasized sense of empathy.

¹⁰ David Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 13, 14.

¹¹ Quenot, *The Icon*, 60.

¹² In contemporary Eastern Orthodox circles today, the Byzantine artistic tradition is now considered the most efficient and beautiful way to communicate holiness through an image.

Italian painters strove to create images of the Virgin and Child that also demonstrated the humanity of Christ. It became appropriate to place the Christ Child in a tender gesture with His Mother, and both gesture and appearance became more naturalistic in Italian painting. Giotto's frescoes are famed for introducing a new depth of figural modeling with light and emotional expression. If we take Giotto's *Lamentation* (Fig. 15) for example, one may easily see how the fresco is most concerned with generating the viewer's empathy with the death of Christ. The figures are arranged in a stage-like composition, making dramatic gestures, and their faces are contorted with expressions of grief. Although quite different from the Byzantine approach, the Italian painters were trying to create an immediate encounter with divinity through alternative means.

The evolving naturalistic style in the West is not necessarily degenerate in comparison to the Byzantine style. Especially when we reconsider the gold-ground works from the Ducento and the first half of the Trecento, Italian painting hardly turned from its Eastern prototypes. Yet their subtle alteration can be credited with creating the opportunity through which the pictorial illusionism of the Renaissance would follow and an incredibly different kind of image would emerge. Whereas the Byzantine style is concerned with making the divine accessible through the image itself, the evolving Western style sought to bring that divine presence into human reality through a sensual aesthetic. Chapter two described the influence of the Franciscan ministry upon the Western mode of devotion. Patrons and artists alike desired an encounter with the divine that would move their hearts. In parallel to written devotionals that brought the viewer

into deeper sympathy with the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, paintings of the divine similarly brought their viewer into an encounter with the persons of Christ and Mary.

The Liturgical Context of the Altarpanel

The Eastern Church saw icons as more than reminders of divine figures. The holy image participates in the person of the subject depicted.¹³ An icon of Christ is not actually God, for it cannot participate in the Trinity. Yet the wood panel and egg tempera show the face of the person of Christ, and thus the art object is linked to the second person of the Trinity. Recognized as mediating divinity, the icons were venerated as if they were the persons figured. Still today, they are greeted with ceremony before entering into an Eastern Church, incensed like the clerics and congregants present, and their placement in the *iconostasis* of a sanctuary is seen as essential to the construction of an Eastern Church building. Within the sanctuary, the icons surrounding the congregants aid in lifting worshipper's concentration to the heavenly realm. Although the Western Church seems to have believed that an image could mediate the presence of the person depicted, the liturgical structure surrounding the icon was not assimilated into the West.¹⁴ And despite the deep integration of holy images in the Eastern liturgy, the choice to place paintings upon the altar itself was a decidedly Western practice.

Panel paintings held great power for the Western Medieval mind. Similar to the Eastern mystical sense, they could function as vehicles for holy power. In representing the outer likeness of a saint they could also participate in the person and power of that

¹³ Quenot, *The Icon*, 56, 57.

¹⁴ Hendrik W. van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces 1215-1460. Form, Content, Function*, vol. 1 (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1984), 12.

saint. Thus, treated like relics, Holy images accrued legends of miraculous actions, and cults would form around them. Images were also key to verifying the authority of a church in the medieval world. Churches would promote images of local figures in order to draw an audience to a saint that could be found nowhere else and to contribute to religious devotion and civic pride.¹⁵ Secular powers would also commission paintings of saints in order to promote the city or their own power.¹⁶ They could serve as a verifying document by illustrating the history of the saint or relic that the church was dedicated to. Even if the image itself was not miracle-working, its relation to the identity of a divine figure made it holy in its own right.

In the Catholic Church the evolution of the altarpiece began with smaller images placed upon the altar. Originally, these were used to identify the relics of a Church, either serving as permanent reliquaries or only presented upon certain feast days.¹⁷ As seen in chapter two, the standalone images, apart from a relic, would have been identifying a saint pertinent to the Church community.¹⁸ Paintings came to be placed on top of the altar in the thirteenth century, perhaps being seen as fitting replacement for the statue

¹⁵ Sally J., Cornelison and Scott B. Montgomery (eds.), “Simone Martini’s Beato Agostino Altarpiece,” in *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, v. 296 (Tempe, Ariz: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 79.

¹⁶ Cornelison and Montgomery, “Simone Martini’s Beato Agostino Altarpiece,” footnote 79.

¹⁷ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 443.

¹⁸ Ibid., 443. A synod at Trier in 1310 declared that every Church altar should identify the saint it was named after by an inscription or image.

reliquaries fashioned into images of the Virgin and Child.¹⁹ The first few known images that were placed at the altar of Siena Cathedral during the thirteenth century were antependia (attached to the front of the altar).²⁰ These relatively small images (the *Madonna degli occhi grossi* is roughly 1.5 feet long and 2 feet tall) were set on the ground in front of the altar or somehow attached to it. Scholars have judged the placement of the image by scuffmarks.²¹ It has been difficult to determine their orientation upon, in front of, or above the altar, but their vicinity to the sacrificial table made them important contemplative images to communicate with the celebration of the Eucharist.

The altarpiece came to function as a backdrop to the mass. Hans Belting argues for an interesting parallel between the development of the multi-figured altarpiece and the Eastern *iconostasis*.²² The Orthodox *iconostasis* separates the altar apse from the nave of the congregation, and it would have found its functional equivalent in the Western *rood screen*. An *iconostasis* would have borne several painted icons while a *rood screen* may have been adorned with sculptures and intricate motifs. By the thirteenth century, there would no longer be a *rood screen* separating the congregants from the altar in Italy, and the consecrating actions of the priest would have demanded their attention.²³ In the

¹⁹ Os, *Sienese Altarpieces*, 12.

²⁰ Ibid., 12.

²¹ Ibid., 12.

²² Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 22-23.

²³ Victor Michael Schmidt and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (U.S.), and National Gallery of Art (U.S.) (eds.), *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento*

Lateran Council of 1215 it was reaffirmed that Christ's body was physically present in the elements of the mass and priests were to consecrate them facing away from the congregants (*ad orientum*). After the reading from the scriptures, the next most visually significant event of the mass would be the Elevation of the Host. The altarpiece would become a broad work of art that visually framed the consecration of the elements.²⁴ Sitting behind the priest, it would thus focus the attention of those watching the altar and serve as a meditative device.

As we saw in the first chapter, the *hodegetria* usually was the central Incarnational image, but more saints and angels were continually added. The panel could expand its theological program by flanking the conventional *hodegetria* with other saints or scenes from the life of Christ or the life of Mary. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the simple image of the Virgin and Child had evolved into multi-paneled polyptychs. The polyptych was an Italian form of painting, for Eastern icons were never adjoined to one another like their Western counterparts. This innovation allowed for a new expansion of theological program since it incorporated many more figures. These early Sienese polyptychs would have remained open upon the altar, and later hinged altarpieces were employed in closed positions to display alternate images throughout the liturgical calendar.

and Trecento, Studies in the History of Art 61 (Washington: New Haven: National Gallery of Art ; Yale University Press, 2002), 16.

²⁴ Os, *Sienese Altarpieces*, 13.

Late Medieval Devotion to the Virgin

Chapter two told of the emotional mode of Franciscan devotion that ran concurrent with the Trecento “humanization” of the Byzantine style figures. Written devotionals like the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and poems like the *Passione* encouraged a sympathetic devotion to the Incarnation and suffering of Christ.²⁵ Such meditations elaborated upon the narrative and personality of familiar religious figures in order to heighten their visual and emotional characteristics.²⁶ The focus of these written devotionals is less upon the events surrounding Christ’s Passion and more upon the emotional reaction of those near to him—namely the Virgin.²⁷ After defending her purity and virginity for several centuries, the devotee now sought for a way to overcome the gap between their fallen state and that of the holy Virgin. The answer was to try and experience Christ’s suffering by placing themselves in the same mind and emotions that the Mother of God must have passed through. Since she was chosen to bear Christ within her womb, her empathy extended towards Him as part of her own flesh.

The Issue of Identifying with the Virgin’s Purity

The Early Church elevated Mary as the Christian ideal. Her response to Gabriel’s proposal to be the Mother of God Incarnate, “...be it unto me according to thy will,” both receives the indispensable role in human salvation and reveals her own perfect

²⁵ Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death; The Arts, Religion and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century* (Harper Torchbooks, TB 1148. New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 126.

²⁶ Margaret R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 71.

²⁷ Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, 126.

conformity to the will of God (Luke 2:38, Douay-Rheims). She thus typifies obedience to God in her actions. It was important to the Early Church that her role as the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) be affirmed in order to secure the humanity and the divinity of Christ.²⁸ To be both fully human and fully divine, Christ had to remain part of the Trinity while also being born of a woman.²⁹ His singular birth from a virgin further ensured his divinity.³⁰ Fathers of the Church saw it necessary to claim that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ to further ensure His divinity.³¹ Aquinas clarified that like the word that proceeds uncorrupted from the mind, the Word born of Mary could not have corrupted the vessel it inhabited.³² This total giving of herself to God circumscribed her entire will, body, mind, and spirit.

These theological defenses revolve largely around Christological reasons, yet their peripheral effects upon Mary began to take upon their own identity. Citing Christ's entrustment of Mary to John the Beloved as a defense, Bonaventure claims that the Virgin's body forever remained an incorruptible temple for the Holy Spirit, and that she only bore spiritual children after Christ.³³ The widely influential *Protoevangelium of*

²⁸ Brian K. Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven: Marian Doctrine and Devotion, Image and Typology in the Patristic and Medieval Periods* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 25.

²⁹ Ibid., 24-26.

³⁰ Ibid., 15.

³¹ Ibid., 77.

³² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part III, q. 28, a. 2. trans. by The Fathers of the Dominican Eastern Province, (1947). March 20, 2017. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/>>.

³³ Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven*, 104.

James provided accounts from which theologians could argue that Christ's "brothers and sisters" were children of Joseph's previous marriage.³⁴ Further, in order to satisfy the infinite regression of original sin transmitted through the carnal act of sin, it was required that God sanctify Mary within the womb.³⁵ Ellington argues that the growing concern over the Conception of the Virgin was primarily a "grass roots" movement, motivated by lay devotion to apocryphal writings on the life of the Virgin.³⁶ The *Protoevangelium of James* (dating to the second century) and the *Pseudo-Gospel of Matthew* laid the groundwork for what would eventually become the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.³⁷ The *Protoevangelium* had already hinted at the sexless conception of the Virgin that occurred through the embrace of her parents, and the *Pseudo-Gospel* added her vow of virginity to temple of God.³⁸ Throughout the last centuries of the Late

³⁴ Ibid., 54, 92. While the *Protoevangelium* was widely influential in the fourth century Eastern Church, its Latin translation, the *Pseudo-Gospel of Matthew*, was nearly as popular in the West.

³⁵ Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 51, 52. Theologians like Aquinas generally agreed that although the Virgin needed to be sanctified within the womb, they were hesitant to believe that she would be sanctified at the moment of her conception, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part III, q. 27, a. 1, a. 2." trans. by The Fathers of the Dominican Eastern Province, (1947). March 20, 2017. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/>>.

³⁶ Ibid., 53, "...the eventual belief in an Immaculate Conception in the West was the result of lay devotion stimulated by the liturgical celebrations of the Church and by popular works concerning Mary's life."

³⁷ Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven*, 331.

³⁸ Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, 52, 53, and, Miles, *Image as Insight*, 79.

Medieval West, the Conception of the Virgin was celebrated with increasing frequency despite discouragement from prominent leaders like Bernard of Clairvaux.³⁹

This elaborate divine involvement arguably made Mary an ever-distant goal.⁴⁰ Ignoring the special circumstances of her Immaculate Conception and perpetual virginity, Mary was selected to give birth to the Son of God, and this child was conceived and delivered without interrupting her virginity or causing the normal pains of childbirth.⁴¹ The main way in which the laywoman could identify with the Mother of God, the bearing of children, was denied by this sanctification. She did not abandon her humanity, for she still had to go to the Temple for cleansing after giving birth, but she gave birth as no woman was able to of her own power. Biologically, she was liberated from the requirements of the female body, and only Christ bore a human nature whose holiness superseded hers.⁴² Unlike Mary Magdalen, the Virgin Mother could not exhibit regret or sorrow for her sins.⁴³ Thus, the painters of the fourteenth century may have sought to emphasize the Virgin's humanity and humility in order to help the viewer identify with and imitate her.

Our altarpiece (Fig. 3) displays a Marian identity that relates to the dependent affection between a mother and infant. This relationship is here shown through the Christ Child who grasps the Virgin by her shoulders and stretches his face up to meet hers. He

³⁹ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁰ Miles, *Image as Insight*, 79.

⁴¹ Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven*, 285. Bonaventure elaborates upon Mary's effortless birth as a connection to her identity as the "second Eve."

⁴³ Miles, *Image as Insight*, 80, 81.

does not assume the traditional frontal pose and gesture of blessing towards the viewer, instead his attention is fixed upon Mary and he appears as an actual infant.⁴⁴ As a human infant, the omniscient God became the most vulnerable of humankind. St Paul describes Christ as He, "...who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man," (Philippians 2:6,7, Douay-Rheims). In showing the tender and reliant affection that an actual child bears for its mother, the painting stresses Christ's humanity over His divinity. The abstract truth of the Incarnation is here expressed through a true-to-life child, dependent upon His Mother. The Late Medieval Layperson would have been confronted by an incredibly tender and human relationship between the often abstract, holy characters. This affection acts as the access point to empathizing with the sorrow of the Virgin.

Suffering along with the Virgin's Sorrow

Trecento depictions of the Madonna holding the Christ Child often reflect her mourning to come through a solemn facial expression. The Madonna in the painting hardly seems to return the Child's yearning for her affection. Her arms support the Child, holding him to the side, almost like a mother naturally resting a child upon her hip, and she just begins to tilt her face down towards the Child's. Yet her facial expression is ambiguous at best. The Madonna's gaze fails to meet the imploring gaze of her Child, and her thin lips crack an ambiguous half-smile, half-frown. This austere visage is

⁴⁴ Previous examples from the thirteenth century follow the Byzantine tradition of depicting the Christ Child as a small man, or a child with a large head. This was meant to demonstrate the theological virtue of Christ being born both fully human and with the full knowledge of God.

common to Pietro Lorenzetti's work, and it reminds the viewer of the entire plan of the Incarnation.⁴⁵

Christ's Nativity implies his Passion. Shortly following his birth, the Child is presented at the temple to Simeon who praises His arrival, then turns to Mary and says, "Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed," (Luke 2:34,35 Douay-Rheims). The *Deus Homo* was born to die for the salvation of humankind, and this knowledge does not escape Mary. Therefore the Incarnation brings both profound joy and sorrow for the Mother of God, for the joy of humankind's salvation comes only through the death of Christ. In this way, Mary is a model for suffering with Christ.

As the model of human faith chosen to bear the Son of God, devotionals like the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* highlight Mary's suffering for Christ's Passion. She is characterized as being almost violently opposed to the Crucifixion, doing all within her power to withhold Christ from his tormentors and then afterwards to claim his body.⁴⁶ The Mother of God would naturally be the one most deeply struck by her Son's pain. It is not difficult to see how the devotee could better empathize with the gospel narrative by following her progression of emotions before Calvary. Also, as an extension of her own flesh, Christ's suffering affects most deeply she who bore Him in her womb.

⁴⁵ Carlo Volpe and Mauro Lucco (trans.), *Pietro Lorenzetti* (Milano: Electa, 1989), 6, 7. See Pietro Lorenzetti's *Arezzo Polyptych* for comparison (Fig. 10).

⁴⁶ Meiss, *Painting after the Black Death*, 128.

The Intimate Union between God and Mary

This affective devotion contributed to Mary's role as the Mediatrix and near Co-Redemptor with Christ. In pondering the meaning of the Virgin's suffering for Christ's Passion, Late Medieval theologians came to believe that Mary suffered on the behalf of humankind alongside Him.⁴⁷ It was she who best knew how to sympathize with Christ. As the "portal" through whom God entered as a man into the world, she was now the one humans approached to access Him.⁴⁸ As the antitype to Eve, whose disobedience brought sin into the world, Mary's obedience brought God into the World.⁴⁹ Her marriage to God was the cause for the Incarnation.⁵⁰ The erotic poems of the Canticles were increasingly read as an allegory between God and Mary, His bride.⁵¹ The intention was not to sexualize the Incarnation, but to illustrate that the flesh shared between Mary and Christ was as intimate as the union of a groom and bride.⁵²

The painting betrays multiple themes belonging to this allegorical reading of the Canticles. The punched flower motifs along the bottom frame of the panel would have

⁴⁷ Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, 81.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 74. A fifteenth-century English carol explains, "There is no Rose of such vertu, as is the Rose that bare Jesu. For in this Rose contained was, heaven and earth in little space, Alleluia."

⁴⁹ Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven*, 111. Iraneaus elaborates upon Mary's identity as the "Second Eve" in *Adversus Haereses*.

⁵⁰ Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, 48.

⁵¹ Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven*, 45.

⁵² Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, 63. Late Medieval preacher San Bernadino would go so far as to claim that God was "seduced" by the Virgin's purity and virtue.

been a common reference to the lily, whose purity was often taken as a symbol of the Virgin. The vegetal motif could have referenced descriptions found in the Canticles, "...my spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up. Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with fruits of the orchard," (Song of Solomon 4:12,13, Douay-Rheims). Advancing from the outer frame into the painting, this erotic allegory causes us to interpret Christ's childlike affection towards His mother with a complimentary reading.

This image may be read like one of the fourteenth-century sermons from the Canticles that articulated the physical intimacy between Christ and His Mother. Other more explicit examples have survived from the Late Medieval era.⁵³ The unidentified artist has rendered his figures in beautiful, slender proportions that falter only upon the Christ Child's right arm. His hand disappears behind the Madonna's left shoulder and reappears upon her right. However, if we could see behind her back we would find the Child's arm to be unnaturally long. However awkward, the pose brings to mind the poet's words, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me," (Song of Solomon 2:6, Douay-Rheims). The Child's left hand is not placed directly underneath the Madonna's head, but this verse may account for the awkward poise of his unnaturally long arm.

The more immediate scriptural reference comes to the mind when judging the close proximity of the Child's face to the Madonna's. Already we have remarked upon this gesture exhibiting the longing of a child for his mother's returned gaze. The Child lifts His face up and the Madonna bends her head down in response to press their cheeks

⁵³ Marilyn Arinberg Lavin, "Cimabue at Assisi: The Virgin, the *"Song of Songs,"* and the Gift of Love," in William R. Cook (ed.), *The Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy. The Medieval Franciscans*, vol 1 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005), 95-112.

against one another—and their lips nearly graze. Just so, the lover of the Canticles implores, “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth...” (Song of Solomon 1:1, Douay-Rheims). Remarkably, the Madonna appears to receive this action from the Christ Child in the painting. Their tantalizingly near-kiss certainly serves as a visual reference to this fourteenth-century characterization of Christ and the Virgin’s intimacy.

The Madonna and Child as Meditation upon the Eucharist

The themes presented by the painting would have been most potent when serving as the backdrop for the celebration of the mass. Unlike its Byzantine ancestors, this Italian altarpiece applies a humanized narrative through inventive gesture to the *hodegetria*. As it sat before the priest consecrating the elements of the Eucharist, his actions would have seemed analogous to the Virgin presenting the Christ Child in the painting. Indeed, Late Medieval sermons bestowed a priestly role upon the Virgin who presented Christ, the paschal victim, to humankind.⁵⁴ Aside from civic devotion, this image would have encouraged the Sienese layperson to identify with the mother and child in the painting. The Mother of God would have served as an access point for contemplation upon the joy of the Incarnation inextricably bound to the sorrow of the Passion, themes communicating directly to the celebration of the Eucharist. The liturgy would have prepared the layperson for receiving according to the Virgin’s expression: solemn reverence aware simultaneously of the gift of salvation and the price it cost. Explicit references to the lovers of the Canticles would have evoked the divine union in flesh between Christ and His Mother, and the Church by extension, through the Eucharist.

⁵⁴ Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, 88.

CHAPTER 3

Connoisseurship Research

This chapter provides the connoisseurship research that I conducted mainly during the spring of 2015. I originally concluded that this painting was made within the first half of the fourteenth century by an artist within the workshop of Pietro Lorenzetti. However, technical and stylistic evidence proved to be less decisive than I had hoped. I shall first show what written attributions preceded my research, provide stylistic comparisons in order to establish a date and region of artists, and then state what case for an attribution can be made from the halo punch marks.

Prior to being acquired by the Armstrong Browning Library, the painting received the opinion of multiple scholars. I found the typewritten attributions and the restoration portfolio to be the most useful primary documents in the Armstrong Browning Library curatorial files. There have been eight written attributions made to this painting, all of which have been reproduced in type.¹ All of these identify the strong influence of Pietro Lorenzetti in the work, yet abstain from making the attribution to the master Pietro himself. Most of the scholars agree that, “the artist closely imitated Pietro’s style but remains unidentified.”² Most but not all of these attributions also place the work in the

¹ ABL Curatorial Files. Seven attributions are written upon the backs of photos held in the Curatorial Files, one has been taken from a letter written by Roberto Longhi to Count Contini-Bonacossi.

² ABL. Curatorial Files. For example: Raimond van Marle, typewritten note, *Madonna and Child*, “A beautiful picture by a Sienese master who strongly felt the influence of the Lorenzetti but who is as yet unidentified.”

first half of the fourteenth century. We shall see that both stylistic and technical evidence frame this piece within the first half of the fourteenth century as well.

We have already described the artistic and cultural influences that formed this altarpiece of the *Madonna and Child* (Fig. 3). Fourteenth-century Siena was an emerging center for the arts in central Italy. Its geographic location as the gateway between the Mediterranean Sea and Northern Europe brought several cultural and artistic influences to its divided city-states. The popular High Gothic arts here came into contact with the Byzantine style of the Eastern Mediterranean. During the Fourth Crusade (1204) Western Europeans temporarily occupied Constantinople, and Italians were introduced to the “Greek Manner” or Byzantine style. The artists of Siena began to synthesize these two traditions, and their preliminary technical discoveries of perspective and naturalism would come to usher in the early Renaissance. The region of Siena neighbored Florence, and although the art produced in these two states were generally different they constantly influenced one another by migrating artists.

The two artists Giotto di Bondone and Duccio di Buoninsegna were most renowned for their works and the precedent they set for their respective regions. The style of Giotto in particular dictated Florentine frescoes and Duccio was admired for his altarpieces in Siena. Duccio was born sometime within the last two decades of the thirteenth century and was active from 1278 to 1318. He is best known for his *Maestà* (Fig. 6), commissioned in 1308 for the Siena cathedral. The forms of his figures became widely imitated. It is easy to see how his work may have borne stylistic influences upon Pietro Lorenzetti, and we know that Pietro’s attributed work on the frescoes at San Francesco show a kinship to Giotto’s work at the Arena Chapel.

Within Duccio's close circle were the artists Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini, and Ugolino di Nerio (also known as Ugolino da Siena). Little is definitively known about Pietro and the other early Trecento artists aside from scattered documents and surviving signed works. Ignoring the fact that their records were often biased, Ghiberti does not mention Pietro Lorenzetti in his writings and Vasari misspelt his name as "Pietro Laurati".³ Multiple sources claim that less than five percent of all Trecento works made have survived to today, and thus we rely upon incomplete biographical and art historical accounts of the Trecento period.

Comparative Visual Works

It is important to establish a reference point with the style of Duccio, whose painting has greatly determined the appearance of this painting and the other altar panels we shall compare it to. Duccio's *Maestà* (Fig. 16) is most immediately thought of, and it serves to demonstrate the continuity of his style. Here he depicts the Madonna turned slightly to her left, holding the Child to her left side. The line with which Duccio forms the Madonna's drapery and outlines her figure is the main stylistic feature that is repeated in the *Madonna and Child* and the other altarpieces.

In order to make an accurate stylistic analysis it is important to make visual comparisons from Pietro's definitive *oeuvre*. Few Trecento works have been documented, and many have been attributed to the known names of artists based upon

³ "Pietro Lorenzetti." Oxford Art Online. Benezit Dictionary of Artists. April 28, 2015
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00111629?q=Pietro+Lorenzetti&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1>.

style.⁴ Few documented works have survived from Pietro Lorenzetti's *oeuvre*, and I was careful to make decisive stylistic comparisons only to his authoritative paintings.⁵ Pietro retained the stylistic advances from Duccio in his work. His contemporary Simone Martini, and gothic sculptor Giovanni Pisano are also thought to have heavily influenced his style. Compared to his Sienese contemporaries, Pietro's paintings are often described as more somber and rigid.

Comparisons to Pietro Lorenzetti

His earliest documented work, the *Arezzo Polyptych* (Fig. 17), is a prime example of his austere expression. The Madonna stares at the Christ Child with a rather grave expression and holds Him to her left side. This is an excellent work of Pietro from which we may see the influence of Duccio. The line of the Madonna's drapery, her outline, and the elongated fingers utilized by Duccio are present here. Yet the Madonna's facial features and drapery are strikingly different from any of Duccio's works. The thin, elongated eyes and the elaborate patterning of the drapery are a result of the Northern Gothic influence.⁶ Much like our painting, the figures are set in rigid outlines. Also, the Christ Child in the *Arezzo Polyptych* looks less like a little man and more like an infant, and the Child we see here is the most similar out of Pietro's *oeuvre* to the Child in the painting. The three-quarter turn of his head and the pattern of curls that make up his hair are strikingly similar to ours. Indeed, there is perhaps no stronger resemblance to the

⁴ Carlo Volpe, *Pietro Lorenzetti* (Milano, Electa: 1989), 6, 7.

⁵ Aware of my own lack of expertise in judging stylistic comparisons, I sought to make an informed and honest comparison to Pietro's work rather than assuming that the master did the painting.

⁶ Volpe, *Pietro Lorenzetti*, 9.

painting in question out of Pietro Lorenzetti's definitive *oeuvre* as that of the *Arezzo Polyptych*.

The next panel to consider from his definitive *oeuvre* is Pietro's *Uffizi Madonna* (Fig. 18). This piece is thought to come from the latter end of his career, c. 1340. The date assigned to this painting would place it after the time in which Pietro is thought to have spent time in Florence. Here the Madonna's robe is simple and blue, and the artist's style seems farther removed from the initial impressions of Duccio. The Christ Child standing upon His mother's lap is quite different from the one in the painting in question, but I would argue that the features of the Madonna's face in the *Uffizi Madonna* are stylistically more similar to the painting than those of the Madonna's face in the *Arezzo Polyptych*. Thus, this work does not serve to show similarities to our painting as much as it is meant to point of differences. Pietro's style evolved over time, and if it evolved along a linear progression (meaning he did not repeat an older style), then we may conclude that the works most closely resembling the tradition set by Duccio occurred earlier than 1340.

Rebutting the "Ugolino Lorenzetti" Identity

A couple of the attributions suggest that the work might belong to the *oeuvre* of "Ugolino Lorenzetti."⁷ "Ugolino Lorenzetti" is the name designated for a group of works that display a transitional style between that of Ugolino di Nerio and Pietro Lorenzetti. I disregarded this curious identity in the attribution of the painting because "Ugolino Lorenzetti" is not the name of an actual artist. Bernard Berenson (the pioneer of Italian

⁷ ABL. Curatorial Files. Both W. Suida and Roberto Longhi mention but do not directly attribute the painting to the name "Ugolino Lorenzetti" in their notes.

Renaissance connoisseurship) grouped together several Sienese works that he saw bore the influence of both Ugolino di Nerio and Pietro Lorenzetti, and he attributed them to an “intermediary personality” that he titled *Ugolino Lorenzetti*.⁸ In recent scholastic history, the *oeuvre* given to Ugolino Lorenzetti has been combined with the *oeuvre* constructed for the Ovile Master (an unidentified late Trecento master) and now has been reattributed to the Sienese mid-Trecento painter Bartolommeo Bulgarini (1337—1378).⁹ These works all bear a similar blend of Sienese styles, yet the progression of this attribution process has been based upon little to no documentation. There are several problems with making attributions based upon stylistic evidence, let alone the entire *oeuvre* of an artist. Since it is quite probable that the hands of many different artists are represented in the “Ugolino Lorenzetti” *oeuvre*, I resisted attributing the painting to it.

Comparisons to Ugolino di Nerio

Due to multiple considerations of “Ugolino Lorenzetti,” it is appropriate to consider the influence that the works of Ugolino di Nerio (1317—1349) bear upon this painting (Fig. 19). When viewing an altarpanel by Ugolino, the similarity in the Madonna’s drapery becomes immediately apparent. The lines of Ugolino’s drapery mimics the tradition of Duccio, but the shading of her sleeves and her exposed cuffs are

⁸ ABL. Curatorial Files. Roberto Longhi (signed), Typewritten letter to Count Contini Bonacossi, Madonna and Child, dates May 1928, Rome, “...one might easily be led to associate this work with the intermediary personality between the first followers of Duccio and Pietro Lorenzetti, who on account of his historical position has been provisionally given by Berenson to the temporary name of Ugolino Lorenzetti.”

⁹ Erling Skaug, “Punch marks—what are they worth? : problems of Tuscan workshop interrelationships in the mid-fourteenth century the Ovile Master and Giovanni da Milano” *La pittura nel XIV e XV secolo, il contributo dell’analisi tecnica alla storia dell’arte* (1983): 255-256

exceptionally like those seen in the painting in question. Also, the design of Ugolino's headdress—a dark hood with an intricate gold border atop a white, silk mantle—is repeated in the painting.

Stylistically, Ugolino was most consistent with Duccio out of the rest of the Trecento masters. Like Duccio, both Ugolino's altar panel and the painting in question continue to use the same outline, drapery, and slender hands. However, his Madonna is a half-length figure, and her face looks far more like a Duccio Madonna than the face of this Madonna in the painting.

Considering Bartolommeo Bulgarini

It is also necessary to correct the possibility of attributions to Bartolommeo Bulgarini (1337—1378). He is important to consider, as the style of Pietro Lorenzetti heavily influenced his work and his attributed *oeuvre* is now mingled with the “Ugolino Lorenzetti” identity (Yet this is also one of the primary reasons I hesitate to consider his *oeuvre*). However, his recorded activity begins c. 1340, and I believe that this work occurred prior to his career. We may compare our *Madonna and Child* to his painting of *Mary Magdalene* for a revealing comparison (Fig. 20). Almost an exact reverse pose of our Madonna, his handling of drapery is quite different. While the Madonna's sleeves undulate and fall in curves, Bulgarini's Magdalene pulls a geometric and triangular sleeve across her chest. I would also argue that the Magdalene's facial features are wider set than those of the Virgin. Since I sense that our painting is so close in style to the works of these early Sienese artists made c. 1310-1320, I believe that the painting is more appropriately placed within c.1330-1340.

Technical Evidence

The *Madonna and Child* by an unknown follower of Pietro Lorenzetti has suffered heavy paint loss, as noted by the records of the restorers.¹⁰ The gold gilding has begun to peel away and the red bole, or binding of the paint, shows beneath. The red of the Christ figure and Christ Child's robes have faded a great deal from their original vibrancy, and the skin colors have faded as well.

The Madonna's robe has turned a greyish-green hue, which can be accounted for by an azurite pigment used during the Trecento for the color blue. Most early altar panels, whose robes have not been repainted, show this same effect, for the color blue used in the Madonna's mantle, turned dark grayish green due to the decay of the egg medium over time. By the end of the fourteenth century, apparently, painters began to notice what was happening, and in most later paintings the Virgin's blue mantle is painted with materials that retain their intended hue."¹¹ This bit of technical evidence helps us to place this painting within the definite frame of the fourteenth century. The Madonna's robes are greyish, and thus the painting must have been completed before the end of the century. We see that its decorative designs help to further define this window of time.

¹⁰ ABL. Curatorial Files. Typed note in the restoration portfolio, February 1985, "The aging of materials, environmental conditions and possibly, previous, heavy-handed restorations have taken a toll on the paint—the result being a weakened image."

¹¹ Cennino Cennini, Daniel V. Thompson (trans.), *The Craftsman's Handbook* (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), 35, 36. See for a description of the preparation of blue azurite pigment. For more information about the inferiority of this pigment, see Morris, Roderick Conway. "Lapis Lazuli and the History of 'the Most Perfect' Color." *The New York Times*, August 18, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/19/arts/international/lapis-lazuli-and-the-history-of-the-most-perfect-color.html> > .

Punch Marks

The faded colors may complicate visual comparisons with the painting, but its punch motifs are still intelligible. Punch marks (also called punch-motifs) are the decorative stamped patterns seen in the haloes of the figures in our painting. In our case, they are also unusually stamped along the base of its frame. In the creation of an altar panel, after the main figures had been outlined and the gilder had bound the gold to the surface of the panel, an artist would decorate the surface of the gold with patterns.¹² An artist administered punch motifs by striking a mallet upon one end of a tool that had a shape engraved or cast at the other end. No original punches have survived from the fourteenth century, and we may only speculate as to their material and form.¹³ Their purpose was to adorn the panel and to cause light to shimmer on the gold surface.

The presence of punch marks is our next bit of technical evidence that helps to further narrow the window of time within which the painting was done. Halo patterns were originally tooled by hand before the punch method became prominent. Examples of tooled haloes can be seen in the works of the early fourteenth-century artists, yet after 1320 it is evident that the method was entirely replaced by the punch motifs.¹⁴ The exact date of the obsolescence of hand-tooled haloes is unknown, but it is safe to say that within the first three decades of the fourteenth century they were dispensed for the

¹² Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, 85, 86.

¹³ Erling Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico* (Oslo, Norway: IIC-Nordic Group, 1994), 2: 544-545.

¹⁴ Jane Turner, *The Dictionary of Art* (New York: Grove's Dictionaries Inc., 1996), 20: 510.

stamped haloes. Our painting bears punch marks and therefore was probably created in a year after 1320.

The reason for switching to punches may have been based either upon popular taste or practical resources. Simone Martini (c.1280—1344) is credited as being the first artist to begin using punch motifs in his haloes.¹⁵ Simone Martini was widely admired for his cosmopolitan commissions, and perhaps his works bore a great influence that set a new stylistic trend across Italy. We may imagine that this was also more time and energy efficient than the previous method of tooling halo designs by hand. In a practical sense, Medieval artists operated within workshops that operated as businesses, and they would have leapt at the chance to create a panel just as decorative and more efficiently. Today, there are various prevailing ideas about what the punch motifs actually tell us about the specific hand of a painting.

The origination of individual sets of punches leads to the theories of identification developed by Frinta and Skaug.¹⁶ When Simone first began using punch motifs he began by utilizing twenty-one distinct punch motifs.¹⁷ This means that Simone had a set of punches unique to his workshop. His fellow artists, notably the Lorenzetti brothers, pioneering the punch method each had a set of punches unique to their work, and it would seem that every other workshop in the Trecento region must have had their own set of punches. These collections would have been used by all the members of their

¹⁵ Ibid., 20: 509.

¹⁶ Mojmir Frinta, *Punched Decoration: On Late Medieval Panel and Miniature Painting* (Prague: Maxdorf, 1998), and, Skaug, *Punchmarks from Giotto to Fra Angelico*.

¹⁷ Ibid., 20: 510.

respective workshop, but normally not by those belonging to another workshop.¹⁸

Theoretically, if we can match the punch motifs of the painting in question with the punch marks seen in the authoritative works of a Trecento master, then we can identify the workshop it comes from. However the punch collections do not stay in such tidy categorizations.

Punch marks are objective yet inconclusive evidence for attribution. In many works the punches from multiple masters are present, and after their deaths their punches continue to show up in the works of their inheritors. Scholars Mojmir Frinta and Erling Skaug have focused their in-depth studies of punch marks over the large “migration” of punch motifs to Florence.¹⁹ After the Black Death of 1348, which seems to have ended the activity of several masters of the Sienese Trecento, it seems as if the various collections of punches pooled into one joint-shop (*compagnie*), and then spread to Florence c. 1350-60.²⁰ We are not interested in the migration to Florence, for the painting is decidedly Sienese and early fourteenth-century in style, but we are concerned with this idea of a joint-shop. If we are open to the possibility of the painting being made after the middle of the century, then the painting may have been a result of such a collaboration of “leftover artists.” Skaug admits that his own hypothesis is imperfect and that it would disrupt the chronology of present artists’ *oeuvres*, but he provides useful insights as to how the punches may have been passed from one artist to another.²¹

¹⁸ Skaug, “Punch marks—what are they worth?” 253.

¹⁹ Ibid., 253, 254.

²⁰ Ibid., 253, 254.

²¹ Ibid., 256.

There are two main ways in which punches may have been dispersed among artists. Skaug outlines two different kinds of diffusion.²² “Primary diffusion” occurs between contemporary artists, and indicates both the borrowing and sharing of punches or even collaboration between artists. Trecento artists have been recorded to collaborate on larger commissions. Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti painted frescoes for Santa Maria della Scala together in 1335, and it is from this now lost painting that we draw the relationship of the brothers.²³ Scholars may also trace the lineage of punch marks in order to discuss the workshop continuity they indicate.

“Secondary diffusion” occurs after the master’s death, when the punches were passed to a younger artist. According to this theory, the posthumous punches of an early master in the works of later artists may show the relationship of apprenticeship. This hereditary process was common among families of artists.²⁴ It is from “secondary diffusion” that Skaug has drawn the conclusion that the punches from the various early Trecento masters pooled into one workshop after the plague of 1348.²⁵ He concludes that the remaining artists must have banded together to pool resources. However, most of our stylistic comparisons indicate that our painting was completed before the middle of the fourteenth century.

²² Ibid., 253.

²³ Mojmir Frinta, "Observations on the Trecento and Early Quattrocento Workshop," *Studies in the History of Art* 38. (1993), 22.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Skaug, “Punch marks—what are they worth?” 254.

Early Trecento masters may have begun to use punches as a way to evince their own or their workshop's hand in a work. Frinta posits that it may have been a subtle way of signaling of the hand of a master or workshop that made the painting.²⁶ These "secondary signatures" of the workshop may have served as an autograph recognizable to other artists' circles or even as a brand or logo for the *oeuvre* of a workshop. Logically, if each workshop did originally have a unique set of punches, then distinct punch marks ought to evince the authorship of a particular workshop.

Frinta's hypothesis has largely risen from the works of the Lorenzetti brothers. Each brother used his own large and highly distinctive set of punches, which emphasizes a greater distinction between their two separate workshops.²⁷ This compounds the fact that Pietro and Ambrogio also painted in two very different styles of characters. Yet they have been known to collaborate in at least one instance (mentioned earlier), and the brothers' punches appear in selected instances of each other's works.²⁸ Frinta offers that perhaps this was how the brothers claimed which figures they made in the painting, or that this designated the hand of an assistant lent from to from shop to the other.²⁹ Therefore, although the punch marks in our own painting may not provide us with the name of a specific artist, they will indicate a relationship to some early Trecento master. The apparent borrowing of punches muddies the waters, and punch motifs are still not a

²⁶ Frinta, "Observations on the Trecento," 21.

²⁷ Ibid., 22.

²⁸ Ibid., 22, 23.

²⁹ Ibid., 23.

definite cause of attribution to the hand of a master, but they ought to indicate the locality of an artist's training or participation in a workshop.³⁰

This technical side of Trecento altar panels has not been thoroughly explored, and resources for identifying punches are not readily available to students. Skaug and Frinta's work focuses upon the punches in Florentine altarpanels, but their records have marginally included many Sienese masters as well. The recorded punches of Skaug's, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico*, and his article, *Punch Marks—What Are They Worth?* have proven to be the most promising in identifying the punches in this painting. Skaug outlines the identification process of punch motifs. Usually each figure's halo has three concentric rings. The distinguishable punch marks of concern are located in the wider middle ring. Florentine and Sienese haloes can be distinguished by the arrangements of punch motifs in their design. A single punch that is repeated in a row, termed as a "pearls-on-a-string" design, is common to Florentine haloes.³¹ The Sienese haloes are instead arranged in a repeated series of clusters along the ring. The Madonna's halo in our painting best represents this style (Fig. 21), and it further affirms that this is a Sienese work.

The flower-shaped punch that can be found in the Christ Child's halo (Fig. 22) and repeated along the base of the altar panel look much like one belonging to Pietro Lorenzetti. The shape of this flower is singular, with six lobes around a central ring. It is the same as the punch seen in figure 15 on page 279 of *Punch Marks—What Are They Worth?* taken from Pietro's *Uffizi Madonna* (Fig. 23). This punch is also identical to the

³⁰ Ibid., 21.

³¹ Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico*, 2: 495.

flower motif listed under number 613 of *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico* (Fig. 24), taken from a work by Bartolommeo Bulgarini, whose artistic lineage Skaug and others have traced to Pietro Lorenzetti.³² Combining the presence of this motif with the stylistic similarities to Pietro, the painting exhibits an even stronger connection to the Lorenzetti.

In an email correspondence with Erling Skaug, I was given a much more thorough examination of the Madonna's halo.³³ He claims that the ovals that make up the clusters in the halo have had small dots added to them, and that these are a common motif. The little squares turned diagonally around the outer rim of the halo were a custom of Ugolino di Nerio and other artists. He also mentions that the scattered dots within the ring seem "a bit loose" for dating to the second half of the fourteenth century, although this is not too serious of a concern. He refrained from drawing any decisive conclusions from the punchwork without precise measurements.

Discoveries since Spring 2015

Fortunately, I soon had the chance to examine the painting up close. July 10, 2015 Dr. Hornik applied for a Fellowship and received permission to dismount particular paintings from the walls of the Armstrong Browning Library in order to inspect their condition for pests and need for conservation. The Madonna and Child was thankfully pest-free and in as good shape as it could be without additive restoration. When it came off the wall, I was able to better scrutinize its details under better lighting, and I took

³² Skaug, "Punch marks—what are they worth?" 255, 256.

³³ ABL. Curatorial Files. Printed email reply from Erling Skaug, April 13, 2015.

photos measuring the punch motifs with a small ruler. Equipped with more specific evidence, I approached Skaug again.

In another email exchange with the punch cataloguer, the punchwork turned out to be less conclusive than I had hoped.³⁴ Skaug believes that the arrangement of clusters in the Madonna's halo is "un-Lorenzettian," and its closest relative would be the halo work done for Bartolommeo Bulgarini's *S. Croce Altarpiece*. Likewise the flower motif, relatively inarticulate compared to the Lorenzetti's, is more like the punch employed by Niccolo di Tomasso (a Florentine painter). Inquiring after its application along the bottom of the frame, Skaug confirmed that this was a common practice. The frame and painting were thus integrated into a unified object by utilizing the same punches for haloes along the hems of garments and the moulding. He concluded by saying that while the painting style of the figures points towards an affinity with the early Trecento works of the Lorenzetti, the working of the gold leaf is more common to late fourteenth-century artists.

The Issue of Attribution and Dating

This tension between stylistic and technical evidence is unsurprising. The work of connoisseurship usually lands upon shaky grounds once it extends past the evidence provided by proper documentation. With no signature or record of commission, the next most definite case for attribution can be built upon technical data. Following this, the case is established upon stylistic comparisons. However, we can easily see the weakness of subjective comparisons since close followers and forgeries can fool the human eye. Stylistic arguments also rely upon the claim that we understand the entire artistic output

³⁴ Printed email reply from Erling Skaug, January 9, 2017.

of an artist's life. Admittedly, these concerns may also discredit technical evidence. When considering the incomplete knowledge we have of Trecento artists today, I recognize that I would do better to rely upon the eye and experience of Late Medieval experts, rather than fruitlessly mining for further comparisons.

Originally, I had believed that the flower motif would allow us to make a more authoritative attribution to Pietro Lorenzetti. According to Skaug's "primary diffusion," if the painting was done during within Pietro's activity then either it must have come from within his shop, or he lent an assistant to help another workshop complete it. With regards to "secondary diffusion," if an outsider of the Lorenzetti workshop did the painting, then it must have been done after Pietro's death. For, the only reason that someone outside of the Lorenzetti workshop would be using Lorenzetti punches is if they had inherited the punches. Were this true, the painting should then be reattributed to the workshop of Pietro Lorenzetti

However, Skaug's clarification of the punchwork conflicts with this early dating. Previous scholarly attributions, based upon stylistic evidence, generally place this painting between 1330-1340. My own stylistic comparisons have agreed with the attribution to the first half of the fourteenth century as well. It could be that this is an older Trecento painting whose punchwork is prototypical for the paintings to come after the plague of 1348. Yet if Skaug is correct (And he does admit that his survey of Sienese punch motifs is much more incomplete in comparison to his knowledge of Florentine haloes³⁵), then this may instead be a post-plague Trecento work imitating an older painterly style.³⁶

³⁵ Printed email from Erling Skaug, January 9, 2017.

³⁶ Hendrik W. van Os and Gail Aronow. *Sienese Altarpieces*, vol 2 (Groningen: Forsten, 1990), 24-33. See for a thorough discussion on ordering Trecento stylistic development historically. This case for a post-plague attribution would conform to Meiss' traditional understanding of a resurgence of older forms after the plague. This theory reads the resurgence as an intensified religiosity in response to the plague being understood as divine punishment. However, most art historians now date a large substance of Meiss' examples of these post-plague works to prior to 1348.

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APPENDICES

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Cimabue. *Madonna Enthroned*. c.1280-1290. (Uffizi. Florence)
Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 2. Giotto. *Madonna Enthroned*. c.1310. (Uffizi. Florence)
Photo Credit: Wikipedia





Figure 3. Follower of Pietro Lorenzetti of the Sienese School. *Madonna and Child*. c.1350-1400. (Waco, TX. Armstrong Browning Library)
Photo Credit: Bob Smith Photography

Figure 4. Unknown. *Madonna degli occhi grossi*. c.1225. (Siena. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo)
Photo Credit: Wikipedia



Figure 5. Unknown. *Madonna del Voto*. c.1261. (Siena. Duomo)
Photo Credit: Wikipedia





Figure 6. Duccio di Buoninsegna. *Maestà*. 1308-1311. (Siena. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo)
Photo Credit: Wikipedia



Figure 7. Duccio di Buoninsegna. *Maestà* (detail). 1308-1311. (Siena. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo)
Photo Credit: Wikipedia

Figure 8. Unknown. *Madonna and Child*. c. 1225-1250. (Siena. Pinacoteca Nazionale)
Photo Credit: Pinacoteca Siena

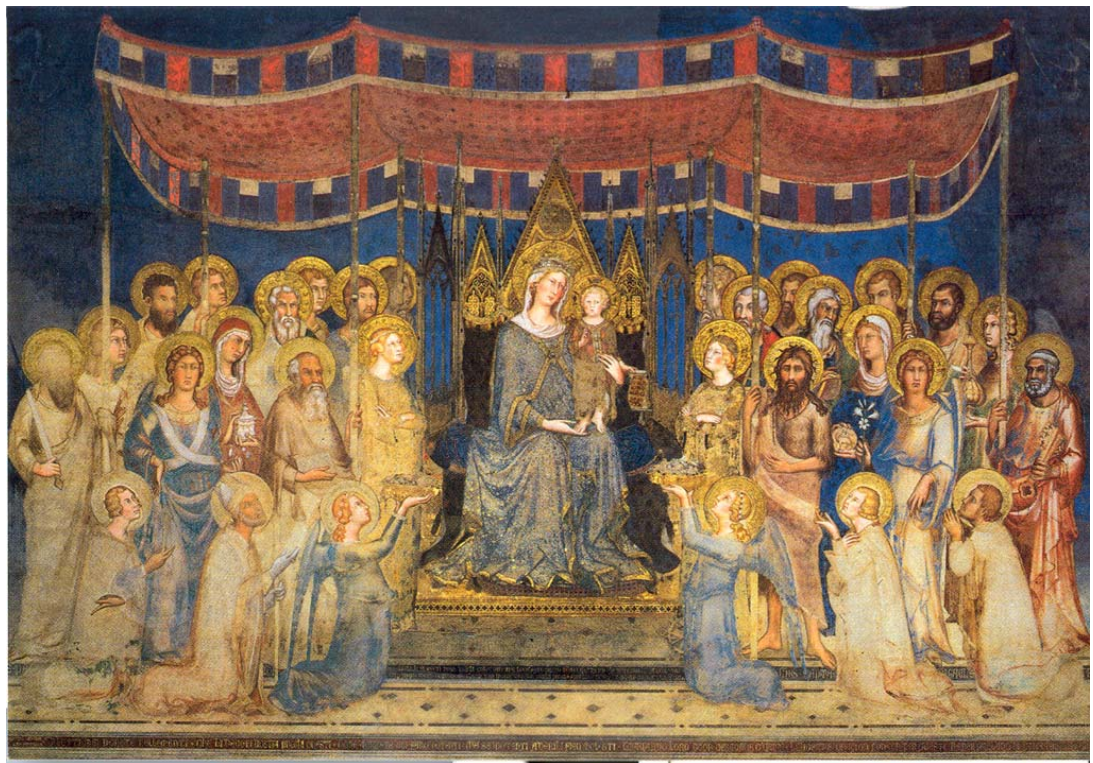


Figure 9. Simone Martini. *Maestà*. 1315-1320. (Siena. Pinacoteca Nazionale)
Photo Credit: Wikipedia



Figure 10. Pietro Lorenzetti. *Arezzo Polyptych*. 1320. (Arezzo. Pieve di S. Maria)
 Photo Credit: Wikipedia

Figure 11. Pietro Lorenzetti.
Carmelite Polyptych. 1329. (Siena.
 Pinacoteca Nazionale)
 Photo Credit: Wikipedia



Figure 12. Pietro Lorenzetti. *Uffizi
 Madonna*. 1340. (Florence. Uffizi)
 Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 13. Pietro Lorenzetti.
Birth of the Virgin. 1342.
(Siena. Duomo)
Photo Credit: Photobucket,
“solekat205”



Figure 14. Pietro Lorenzetti. *Passion Cycle*. First half of the fourteenth century. (Assisi. S. Francesco)
Photo Credit: www.sanfrancescopatronitalia.it

Figure 15. Giotto. *Lamentation*.
Date. (Scrovegni Chapel.
Padua, Italy).
Photo Credit: Wikipedia



Figure 16. Duccio di
Buoninsegna. *Maestà* (detail).
1308-1311. (Siena. Museo
dell'Opera del Duomo)
Photo Credit: Wikimedia
Commons



Figure 17. Pietro Lorenzetti.
Arezzo Polyptych (detail). 1320.
(Arezzo. Pieve di S. Maria)
Photo Credit: ArtStor



Figure 18. Pietro Lorenzetti.
Uffizi Madonna (detail).
1340. (Florence. Uffizi)
Photo Credit: ArtStor



Figure 19. Ugolino di Nerio.
Madonna and Child. c. 1315-20.
(The Louvre, Paris).
Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 20. Bartolomeo Bulgarini.
Mary Magdalene. 1337-1378.
(Rome, Pinacoteca Capitolina)
Photo Credit: www.aug.edu



Figure 21. Follower of Pietro Lorenzetti of the Sienese School. *Madonna and Child* (detail of Madonna's halo).
c.1350-1400. (Waco, TX. Armstrong Browning Library)
Photo Credit: Author



Figure 22. Follower of Pietro Lorenzetti of the Sienese School. *Madonna and Child* (detail of Christ Child's halo).
c.1350-1400. (Waco, TX. Armstrong Browning Library)
Photo Credit: Author



Figure 23. Matching floral punch, fig. 5. Excerpt from Erling Skaug's *Punch marks— what are they worth?* p.279.

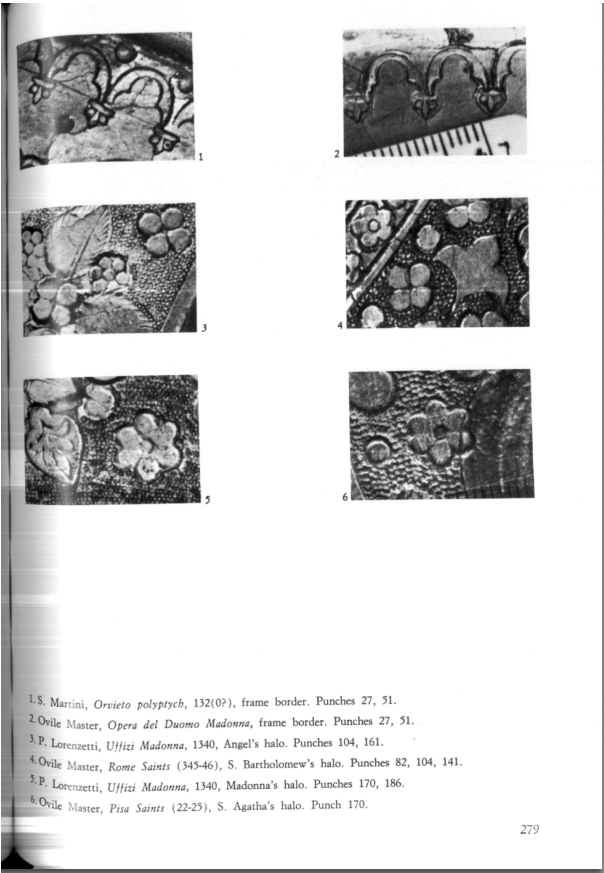


Figure 24. Matching floral punch, catalogue number. 613. Excerpt from Erling Skaug's *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico*.

| | | | |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 613 | | | Bartolomeo Bulgarini -> Pietro Lorenzetti |
| 614 | | | Bartolomeo Bulgarini; Niccolò di Ser Sozzo ----> Giovanni da Milano -> Andrea Bonaiuti; Niccolò di Tommaso; Andrea/Jacopo di Cione; Nardo di Cione; Others in the "Post-1363 Collaboration"; Giovanni del Biondo * |
| 615 | | | Bartolomeo Bulgarini; Luca di Tommè ----> Giovanni da Milano -> Niccolò di Tommaso; Andrea/Jacopo di Cione; Nardo di Cione; Silvestro dei Gherarducci; Others in the "Post-1363 Collaboration"; Giovanni del Biondo; Pietro Nelli; Cenni di Francesco ---//---> Taddeo di Bartolo * |
| 616 | | | Pietro Lorenzetti ----> Naddo Ceccarelli |
| 617 | | | Pietro Lorenzetti ----> Jacopo Pellicciaio? |
| 618 | | | Bartolomeo Bulgarini |
| 619 | | | Simone Martini/Lippo Memmi |

Re: Unidentified punch marks



Erling Sigvard Skaug <esskaug@online.no>

Mon 1/9, 11:45 AM

Eberlein, Nathaniel



Reply all | v

Inbox

Dear Mr. Eberlein,

Technical evidence sometimes point in other directions than stylistic evidence, and sometimes we simply have to admit that there is no answer. Obviously the production of altarpieces in fourteenth-century Tuscany must have been quantitatively comparable to that of seventeenth-century Holland. With only fragments of the original output left and problems of connecting all the names in the guild's lists with actual works there are still plenty of white spots.

Stamped decoration in the frame members is commonplace. Framing and picture were mutually integrated in a coherent structure. The same punch tools were used everywhere, in haloes, dress borders, along the mouldings as well as on them.

Although I have pointed to post-1348 typological parallels in the punch motifs that does not necessarily mean that they are literally prototypes for those in your painting. My recordings contain deliberate omissions for Siena, since I chose to concentrate on Florence in order to arrive (hopefully!) at a statistically reliable mapping for that city. The oblong hippodrome-like "oval" with straight sides may have occurred also in earlier trecento Siena, even if only the more regular oval-like variant (i.e. Ambrogio's no. 29) is included from the pre plague years in my index so far.

Personally I don't want to make strong assessments with regard to the painted style. But if you feel you agree with the catalogue entry or a date around 1320-30 you may well propose that it seemingly presents a paradox: typologically early in the painting, typologically late in the punchwork (according to available evidence for the time being).

It is a good idea to consult Frinta's book, since he has recordings I miss. I only hope he would be able to finish a Volume II, with a more structured overview. He has not responded to letters for the past few years, and I fear he is ill or worse in his 95th year.

All the best,

Erling S. Skaug

Den 09.01.2017 16.47, skrev Eberlein, Nathaniel:

Dear Dr. Skaug,

Thank you for your reply! It has not hindered my studies, although this will change my initial conclusions of attribution. I had hoped that it could have come from the LorenzeC workshop, but I agreed that it was probably made by an unnamed artist.

Yes, the repeated flower motif is punched along the front of the bottom moulding (although burn marks from candles have obscured them a little). Do you know why an artist would do this?

Also, according to the gold work, would you date the painting after 1348?

Thank you for your time. I have found your and Mojmir Frinta's work to be highly interesting and useful in my course of study.

- Nathaniel Eberlein

From: Erling Sigvard Skaug <esskaug@online.nott>

Sent: Friday, January 6, 2017 3:30:58 PM

To: Eberlein, Nathaniel

Subject: Re: Unidentified punch marks

Dear Mr. Eberlein,

indeed, I looked up your mail of July and there it was! I may also have seen it in the Berenson or KIF photo collections in Florence long ago. Anyway I apologize for not having replied before, as promised.

Whereas the catalogue's tentative association with Pietro Lorenzetti is understandable from its painted style, its gold work is at variance with his decorative habits and punches, so far as I have been able to record material pertinent to him and his shop. That is valid also for his one-time companion and subsequently independent follower, the "Master of the Loeser Madonna", as well as for Ambrogio.

The oblong rounded double-contour (not really an oval, because of its straight sides) in the Madonna's halo measures c. 12 mm, according to your photograph, whereas the similar shape in Bulgarini's S. Croce altarpiece, my punch no. 28, is only 11 mm. The difference is too great and consistent to be explained, e.g. by sloppily execution of the stamping or surface shrinkage.

The six-part flower stamp in the Child's halo measures c. 5 mm, according to your photograph. The motif seems to be only a simple outline, without any articulation of petals, and without a central dot/circle. The closest typological kin I have would be no. 447, used by the Florentine Niccolò di Tommaso, which is a little smaller, 0,5 mm. It would make little sense in any case.

So, I am sorry to say that I just have no match for the punch work in this painting. My records are far from complete, though, especially with regard to Sienese artists. Similarity in type has little significance in itself, since these motifs - and the overwhelming majority of punch motifs at large - were selected from the standard ornamental repertory of the time.

Is the same flower motif stamped along the underside of the frame, or on the front of the bottom frame member, i.e. moulding? The latter would be quite common, the former rare - at least I know no other example. But painters sometimes tested their tools in "invisible" places. So did fakers. I must admit that I thought, during the first half second of facing the full shot photograph, that the vague, indeterminable "Lorenzettian" type could be a

falsification. However, the gold tooling and the gilded parts look authentic both with regard to execution and ageing.

I hope you are not too disappointed by this. As for its classification, it may leave more freedom. One must think of the great number of artists in trecento Tuscany, today unidentified because of the scanty comparative material that has come down to us. They were all stylistically influenced by one or more of the predominant masters of their time, and style travelled without physical contact.

Thank you for the interesting photographs, good luck with your work, and I am sorry if my forgetfulness has delayed your studies. Let me hear about the "bottom stamping" at your convenience.

Best regards,
Erling S. Skaug

Den 06.01.2017 18.14, skrev Eberlein, Nathaniel:

Thank you for the reply!

It may seem familiar because have inquired about the image before, only now have I measured the punches (it is housed at the Armstrong Browning Library in Waco, Texas). <http://www.browninglibrary.org/index.php?idti48567>

Curiously, the same flower motif in the Child's halo is also stamped along the bottom wooden frame of the panel. Have you ever seen anything like it?

Sincerely,
Nathaniel Eberlein

From: Erling Sigvard Skaug <esskaug@online.nott>

Sent: Thursday, January 5, 2017 4:14:22 AM

To: Eberlein, Nathaniel

Subject: Re: Unidentified punch marks

Dear Mr. Eberlein, thank you for your interesting mail and the good details of the very worn surface. The painting looks definitely familiar (location?), but for the moment I am up to my ears in other matters and will come back to you in a few days. The double-outline oval in the Madonna's halo is un-Lorenzettian; spontaneously with some resemblance to Bulgarini, punch no. 28 in my index (c. 12 mm).

Best regards,
Erling S. Skaug

Den 04.01.2017 22.57, skrev Eberlein, Nathaniel:

Dear Dr. Skaug,

I am an undergraduate student investigating the punch motifs of a

Trecento Madonna and Child altarpiece. I was able to take some pictures measuring the punch marks and was hoping that you could make some comment or identify them?

I've looked through your catalogues, and believe that the flower in the Child's halo belongs to the LorenzeC .

Sincerely,
Nathaniel Eberlein