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Paolo Veneziano's Santa Chiara Polyptych
and the Media of Devotion in Fourteenth-Century Venice

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

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By John Calvin Witty III

This dissertation is a case study of Paolo Veneziano's Santa Chiara Polyptych, an important early fourteenth-century Venetian altarpiece in Venice's Gallerie dell'Accademia. Each of the dissertation's five chapters examines a different aspect of the polyptych as a means to offer new approaches to the artist. In the existing literature, Paolo Veneziano's works are most often described as evidence of Venice's historic ties with the Byzantine Empire. This study demonstrates that in addition to responding to aspects of Byzantine art, Paolo integrated with cultural movements and socioeconomic factors that affected life in cities throughout Western Europe. It also argues that patronage by one of Venice's elite families, the Dandolo, contributed to aspects of the polyptych's design and iconography.

The first chapter considers the polyptych's complex format in terms of objects created to facilitate devotional experience in mendicant contexts, where an appeal to the viewer's emotions was encouraged. The second chapter analyzes the Santa Chiara Polyptych's iconography at a greater level of detail than has yet been undertaken in the literature. This analysis shows that Paolo was current with the latest developments in Franciscan devotional literature, including specific poetic devices. The third chapter considers Paolo Veneziano's detailed representations of silk textiles, which were a pervasive aspect of his oeuvre. The chapter cites evidence from Paolo's sociohistorical context to demonstrate how patterned textiles represented majesty and authority for fourteenth-century viewers. The fourth chapter restores the Santa Chiara Polyptych to its original display context by considering the object in terms of choir screens, a feature in church interiors that were once ubiquitous, but have rarely survived. The chapter offers a hypothesis for the polyptych's original display site in the conventual church of Santa Chiara. The fifth chapter relates the design and ornamentation of the Santa Chiara Polyptych to broader aesthetic trends in fourteenth-century Venice, notably Doge Andrea Dandolo's (r. 1343–1354) patronage projects at the Basilica of San Marco. The Dandolo family's involvement at the Convent of Santa Chiara underscores the relevance of the San Marco projects to Paolo Veneziano's art.

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Introduction

In the West Building of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, a pair of galleries dedicated to gold grounds initiates the story of Italian painting. The placement of works establishes a sense of progress from the first to the second gallery (fig. 1). The progression culminates in the large polyptych by the Florentine painter Agnolo Gaddi (c. 1350–1396) placed on the back wall of the second gallery, occupying the principal sight line through the central doorway. The works placed on either side of the doorway represent a dichotomy in which Venetian painting is viewed as a divergent tradition from central Italian art. An imposing *Coronation of the Virgin* that was long attributed to Paolo Veneziano is displayed to the left of the central doorway in the first gallery (fig. 2). Giotto's (c. 1265–1337) half-length *Madonna and Child* hangs on the opposite side of the doorway to the right. The Coronation of the Virgin is a western iconographic subject that rose to prominence in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth-centuries.[1] Some of its earliest examples are found in the portal carvings of French cathedrals and the apse mosaics of the Roman basilicas of Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Maria in Trastevere.

In the present installation, the display of the Mellon and Kahn Madonnas on the adjoining wall aligns the Coronation panel with the legacy of Byzantine painting. The origin and

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[1] See Émile Mâle, *Religious Art in France, the Twelfth Century : A Study of Medieval Iconography and its Sources,* ed. Harry Bober, trans. Marthiel Matthews (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 184–186; Willibald Sauerländer, "Die Marienkrönungsportale von Senlis und Mantes," *Wallraft-Richartz Jahrbuch,* 20 (1958) : 115–62; Philippe Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge: les origines et les développements d'un theme iconographique* (Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales Albert-le-Grand, 1980) ; and Dale Kinney, "The Apse Mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere," in *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object,* eds. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma Thomas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 18–25.

authorship of these panels has long been debated;[2] in the National Gallery's systematic catalog,

Miklos Boskovits concludes that they were produced by the same author in a workshop that was

"culturally bound to Constantinople."[3] In more recent years the *Coronation of the Virgin* has

been recognized as the work of a painter who immediately preceded Paolo Veneziano and may

have been his father or brother. This painter is known by this panel as the Master of the

Washington Coronation.[4] The blue mantles worn by Christ and the Virgin have the gold

striations of Byzantine style chrysography. They share this detail in common with the Mellon

and Kahn Madonnas. On the other side of the doorway, the folds of the Virgin's blue robe in

Giotto's half-length *Virgin and Child* were rendered without the Byzantine tradition's

schematized striations.

The juxtaposition of chrysography with Giotto's naturalistic rendering is paradigmatic of

institutional responses to Paolo Veneziano. Most museum collections tend to only have one

isolated example of the artist's work.[5] This is in accordance with the regional classifications

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[2] See Jaroslav Folda, "The Kahn and Mellon Madonnas: Icon or Altarpiece?" in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann,* ed. Christopher Moss and Katherine Kiefer, 501–10 (Princeton: Department of Art History, 1995); Joseph Polzer, "The 'Byzantine' Kahn and Mellon Madonnas: Concerning their Chronology, Place of Origin, and Method of Analysis," *Arte Cristiana* 90 (2002): 401–10; Rebecca Corrie, "The Khan and Mellon Madonnas and their Place in the History of the Virgin and Child Enthroned," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium,* ed. Maria Vassilaki, 293–300 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

[3] Miklós Boskovits and Jason Di Resta, *Italian Paintings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. The Systematic Catalogue of the National Gallery of Art* (Washington: National Gallery, 2016), 136–166. The paintings' similarity to the Madonna of the Deesis mosaic in the southern gallery of the Hagia Sopia is the basis for the attribution.

[4] Boskovits and Di Resta, *Italian Paintings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,* 988–1007; see also Cristina Guarnieri, "Il passaggio tra due generazioni: dal Maestro dell'Incoronazione a Paolo Veneziano," in *Il secolo di Giotto nel Veneto,* ed. Giovanna Valenzano and Federica Toniolo, 153–201 (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, 2007) for a summary of the questions attendant to this figure.

[5] The Frick Collection Records of the Organizing Director – Frederick Mortimer Clapp, The Frick Collection/ Frick Art Reference Library Archives, Letter from trustee Walker D. Hines to

codified in Bernard Berenson's attribution lists, where Paolo Veneziano is described as if he was

not an Italian painter: "Nearly as Byzantine as if trained and working at Constantinople.

Influenced somewhat by Italian art."[6] Writing some years later, Roberto Longhi took up

Berenson's sentiment with his characteristic candor in the opening to his *Viatico per cinque*

secoli di pittura veneziana in 1946. The *Viatico* is a response to the exhibition organized by

Rodolfo Pallucchini in Venice shortly after the Second World War, *Capolavori dei Musei Veneti*.

Imagining the reaction of exhibition visitors who he describes as "anche non incolto" [even those

who are not uneducated], he asks, "Siamo in Italia? Dico nell'Italia di Giotto, di Simone, di

Vitale? [Are we in Italy? The Italy of Giotto, of Simone (Martini), of Vitale (da Bologna)]?[7]

While its display of early Italian painting is rooted in the trends of twentieth-century scholarship,

the National Gallery's collection is also an exception to the rule for American institutions in that

it contains two important works of early Venetian painting. In addition to the panel by the Master

of the Washington Coronation, a Crucifixion by Paolo Veneziano (fig. 3) is displayed on the

opposite wall, more closely aligned with Giotto's half-length Virgin and Child. The *Crucifixion*

is displayed between a panel from Duccio's (ca. 1250–1318) *Maestà* and a small devotional

triptych by the Florentine painter Nardo di Cione (c. 1340–1365).[8] The crenellated stone wall

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Helen Clay Frick, March 20th, 1930. This letter about the acquisition of Paolo Veneziano's *Coronation of the Virgin,* his last signed and dated work, contains a representative example from object files in American collections. Trustee Walker Hines wrote, "I was very favorably impressed with the picture and believe it is important enough to be put in the Collection and that it has an exceptional historical and educational value for the Collection, as I believe we have no examples at all of Venetian pictures of this character."

[6] Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance,* Vol. 1, *Venetian School* (London: Phaidon, 1957), 127, first published 1932.

[7] Roberto Longhi, *Viatico per cinque secoli di pittura veneziana* (Milan: Abscondita, 2017), 16, first published 1946.

[8] Boskovits and Di Resta, *Italian Paintings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,* 1092–1110.

and the gilded armor of the centurions are elements of Paolo's *Crucifixion* that the panel shares

with Byzantine representations. The naturalistic rendering of the drapery, and the emotive poses

and expressions of the women standing at the foot of the cross, however, are a reminder that

Berenson and Longhi's assessments of Paolo Veneziano do not represent the full complexity of

the artist's achievement.

Today, Venice's Academia galleries offer the opportunity to view the greatest

concentration of Paolo Veneziano's works in a museum setting. Upon ascending the stairs to

enter the former meeting space of the Scuola della Carità where the collection is housed, the first

work that visitors encounter is the Santa Chiara Polyptych (fig. 4). This dissertation offers an

analysis of the Santa Chiara Polyptych as a case study to provide new approaches to the art of

Paolo Veneziano. The polyptych features fifteen narrative scenes and a largely intact original

frame that has received little attention in the scholarship. Comparison to similar works by Paolo

Veneziano that are securely dated, indicates that the Santa Chiara Polyptych was made between

1330 and 1345.[9] Where previous studies have considered the artist through a lens of cultural

influence to focus on issues related to attribution and chronology, the present study examines

specific aspects of the Santa Chiara Polyptych that demonstrate how Paolo Veneziano and his

workshop responded to the material conditions of life in fourteenth-century Venice to create an

affective devotional image.

A survey of the dominant approaches to Paolo Veneziano in the art historical literature

helps establish the blindspots in our understanding of his work. Most scholarship on Paolo

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[9] Andrea De Marchi, "Una tavola nella Narodna Galeria di Ljubljana e una proposta per Marco di Paolo Veneziano," in *Il gotico in Slovenia: la formazione dello spazio culturale tra le Alpi, la Pannonia e l'Adriatico: atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi,* ed. Janez Höfler, 241–56, 243.

Veneziano is focused either on connoisseurship, analysis of pictorial style, or biography. A recent body of literature features detailed studies of original display contexts and analyses of material qualities or ornamental design. The principal contributions in each of these areas will be surveyed in the following pages. Paolo Veneziano entered modern art historical scholarship in Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *Storia della Pittura in Italia.*[10] Crowe and Cavalcaselle use the *Pala Feriale* to introduce a corpus of only four works.[11] They describe the Vicenza *Death of the Virgin* as having "a wholly Byzantine manner [ha maniera tutta Bizantina]" which they see in "the bare and thin figures [figure di forme scarne ed esili]" with large foreheads (fig. 11).[12] Other details, namely the angel choir and the ascendant Christ are described as "abbastanza grazioso [graceful enough]" and therefore representative of an Italian manner. The approach outlined here by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, that of examining a work by Paolo to isolate details that are representative of a culturally defined tradition of pictorial style, remained the goal for most of the authors who subsequently responded to the artist. This is the case in the series of synthetic histories by Lionello Venturi,[13] Laudedeo Testi,[14] and Raimond van Marle that established the field of early Venetian painting.[15] The emphasis on pictorial style that dominates the early

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[10] Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle and James Archer Crowe, *Storia della ittura in Italia, dal Secolo II al Secolo XVI* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1900) 4: 277–286, first published 1885. Paolo's signed works include variations of "Paulus d(e) Veneciis;" the sobriquet "Paolo Veneziano" is a construction by art historians.

[11] These include the Vicenza *Dormition,* the *Pala Feriale,* the *Frick Coronation of the Virgin,* and *The Vision of Augustus in Stuttgart* which has since been reattributed to a Venetian master working in the final decade of the fourteenth century.

[12] Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Storia della Pittura in Italia,* 280.

[13] Lionello Venturi, *Le origini della pittura veneziana, 1300–1500* (Venice: Istituto veneto d'arti grafiche, 1907)

[14] Laudedeo Testi, *La storia della pittura veneziana,* 2 vols. (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1909). Testi made a notable contribution with his expansion of Paolo's corpus to ten works.

[15] Raimond van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, Vol. 4, *The Local Schools of North Italy of the 14th Century* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1924). On the first page, van

scholarship on Paolo Veneziano is persistent. It was the organizing principle of the exhibition on

Paolo Veneziano organized at Rimini's Castello Sismondo in 2003.[16] These observations on

pictorial style tend to be the basis of conclusions about an object's placement within the

chronology of Paolo's oeuvre.

A few different models have been proposed for the artist's chronology. One approach

dates the more Byzantinizing works earlier in Paolo's activity, seeing them as a point of

departure for a progression that leads to a heightened naturalism.[17] According to another view,

Paolo was influenced first by Giotto, and his style later became increasingly more Byzantine in

response to Paleologan art. The works that can be securely dated by original inscriptions include

the *Dormition of the Virgin* from Vicenza (1333),[18] the *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Angels*

in the Crespi Collection, Milan (1340),[19] the *Pala Feriale* (1345),[20] the *Virgin and Child* in the

Museo Diocesano, Cesena (1347),[21] the Chioggia polyptych (1349),[22] the Louvre's Campana

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Marle says of the Venetian School, "We must admit, however, that it was not a very
distinguished one. Venetian painting, more than that of any other region, remained under the
domination of the Byzantine tradition." The goal of volumes such as these was continued in later
decades with works such as Mauro Lucco's edited volumes, *La pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento,* 2
vols. (Milan: Electa, 1992).

[16] Francesca Flores d'Arcais, ed., *Il Trecento adriatico: Paolo Veneziano e la pittura tra oriente
e occidente* (Rimini: Castello Sismondo), exh. cat.

[17] Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting,* vol. 4, chapter one; Evelyn
Sandberg Vavalà, "Maestro Paolo Veneziano," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 57,
331 (1930): 160–183; and Viktor Lazarev, "Maestro Paolo e la pittura veneziana del suo tempo,"
Arte veneta 8 (1954): 77–89. These three authors are representative of the approach that favors a
progression from Byzantine to Gothic.

[18] Maria Elisa Avagnina et. al., *Pinacoteca civica di Vicenza, dipinti dal XIV al XVI secolo*
(Vicenza: Musei Civici di Vicenza and Fondazione Giuseppe Roi, 2003), 102–5, cat. no. 1.

[19] Michelangelo Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia* (University Park, Penn., University of Pennsylvania
Press, 1970), 114; Filippo Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano* (Milan: Maioli, 2003), 166, cat. no 14.

[20] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 124; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 170, cat. no. 16.

[21] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 104; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 176, cat. no. 18.

[22] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 106; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 180, cat. no. 20.

polyptych (1353),[23] the Piran reliquary altarpiece cover (1355),[24] and the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Frick Collection (1358).[25] The documentary record adds two, possibly three, works to this list: the painting for Francesco Dandolo's tomb (1339),[26] the Dubrovnik crucifix (1348),[27] and possibly the Saint Nicholas panels now in the Uffizi (1340s).[28] The securely dated works do not present a clear progression that can be read in terms of pictorial style. Rather, there is a strong consistency across Paolo's works produced between 1333 and 1358. Naturalistically rendered draperies, Byzantine-style chrysography, patterned textiles, and Gothic architectural details are seen throughout Paolo's oeuvre.

The greatest contribution to connoisseurship on Paolo Veneziano was made by Evelyn Sandberg Vavalà. In her influential article published in *The Burlington Magazine* in 1930 she expanded the artist's corpus to twenty-nine works.[29] Sandberg Vavalà emphasizes a family workshop environment with many painters at work as the key to understanding Paolo Veneziano attributions. She reclaimed numerous important objects for Paolo, including the monumental polyptychs of San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna,[30] the San Severino polyptych,[31] and the panels

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[23] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 116; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 204, cat. no. 30.

[24] Guarnieri, "Lo svelamento rituale delle reliquie e le pale ribaltabili di Paolo Veneziano sulla costa istriano-dalmata," in *La Serenissima via mare: arte e cultura tra Venezia e il Quarnaro,* ed. Valentina Baradel and Guarnieri, 39–53 (Padua: Padua University Press, 2020), 45–9; Antonietta Gallone, "La tavolozza ritrovata: Paolo Veneziano, il polittico di Pirano," in *Histria: opere d'arte restaurate: da Paolo Veneziano a Tiepolo,* 191–7, ed. Cristina Garbagna (Trieste: Museo Civico Sartorio, 2005), exh. cat.

[25] Michelangelo Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 67, 116–17; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 194, cat. no. 25

[26] Cristina Guarnieri, "Il monumento funebre di Francesco Dandolo nella sala del capitolo ai Frari," in *Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari:immagini di devozione, spazi della fede,* ed. Carlo Corsato and Deborah Howard, 151–62 (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2015).

[27] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 108; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 178, cat. no. 19/1.

[28] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 109; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 174, cat. no. 17/1–2.

[29] Sandberg Vavalà, "Maestro Paolo Veneziano," 160–183.

[30] Sandberg Vavalà, 165.

[31] Sandberg Vavalà, 171.

in the Worcester Art Museum,[32] which can be reassembled to form a second version of the intact Parma triptych. She criticized contemporary scholars' tendency to create increasingly new and specific unidentified painters, such as the Master of Piran and the Master of Chioggia. She discerned that works previously attributed to these artists, namely the Campana polyptych in the Louvre and the polyptych formerly in Chioggia's church of San Martino, were in fact by Paolo.[33]

In a series of articles published in the 1950s and 60s, the Byzantine specialist Viktor Lazarev advanced the discussion of Paolo Veneziano's pictorial style.[34] Lazarev makes the important observation that Paolo's engagement with the Byzantine tradition was a response to the contemporary artistic production, meaning the art of the Paleologan period rather than the Comnenian art that painters such as Duccio responded to.[35] He emphasizes the presence of Gothic elements in Paolo's work and describes him as a fundamentally western painter, the first to develop a synthesis between eastern and western styles. [36] Lazarev cites miniature painting and the presence of Greek craftsmen in the mosaic workshops of San Marco as the agents that facilitated Paolo's synthesis.[37] Like Sandberg Vavalà, he opined that calling attention to the contributions of Paolo's workshop assistants and family members offered a more accurate view of the artist. [38]

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[32] Sandberg Vavalà, 172.

[33] Sandberg Vavalà, 165. Examples include the Campana polyptych in the Louvre and the polyptych from the church of San Martino in Chioggia.

[34] Lazarev, "Maestro Paolo e la pittura veneziana del suo tempo," *Arte veneta* 8 (1954): 77–89; Lazarev, "Costantinopoli e le scuole nazionali alla luce di nuove scoperte," *Arte veneta* 13–14 (1959): 7–24; Lazarev, "Saggi sulla pittura veneziana dei sec. XIII–XIV, la maniera greca e il problema della scuola cretese," *Arte veneta* 18 (1965): 17–31.

[35] Lazarev, "Maestro Paolo," 77.

[36] Lazarev, 86.

[37] Lazarev, 78.

[38] Viktor Lazarev, "Review of *La pittura veneziana del Trecento* by Rodolfo Pallucchini," *Art Bulletin* 48, 1 (1966): 119–121.

In the early 1960s, Rodolfo Pallucchini reprised the previous generation's efforts to summarize the broad tradition of Venetian painting with a synthetic history.[39] In the first chapter of his history of Venetian painting, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento,* Pallucchini reaffirms Lazarev's view of Paolo Veneziano as the author of a productive synthesis of two painting traditions. Michelangelo Muraro introduced a new direction in Paolo Veneziano scholarship with the publication of his monograph in 1969.[40] Muraro was responsible for an intervention to the scholarship that was of equal importance to Sandberg Vavalà's foundational article for *The Burlington Magazine.* As part of an effort to write Paolo Veneziano's biography,[41] Muraro interpreted the ongoing chronological debates in light of the historical and cultural conditions of fourteenth-century Venice, namely, the dogates of Francesco (1329–1339) and Andrea Dandolo (1343–1354) and the plague outbreak of 1348. In an interpretation that closely follows Millard Miess's conclusions about Florentine painting after the plague,[42] Muraro proposed a chronology in which undated works with a more Byzantine quality were dated after the plague of 1348. Like Meiss before him, Muraro concluded that the more Byzantinizing works were inherently conservative and therefore a response to the crisis of the plague.[43] While Muraro's conclusions about Paolo Veneziano's chronology are undermined by the evidence of Paolo's securely dated

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[39] Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento* (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1964).

[40] Michelangelo Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1969); an English translation was published under the same title in 1970, all future citations will refer to the English translation.

[41] Filippo Pedrocco, Paolo Veneziano (Milan: Ultreya, 2003). Pedrocco uses the frameworks of biography and connoisseurship to structure his more recent monograph.

[42] Millard Meiss, Painting in Siena and Florence after the Black Death (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951).

[43] Sharon Dale, "Contextual Art History: The Illusion of Precision," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 8, 3 (1989): 32–36. Dale's article includes a summary of later reassessments of Meiss's hypothesis about fourteenth-century Florentine artists' response to the plague of 1348.

works, Muraro's emphasis on biography encourages interpreting Paolo's oeuvre in light of his immediate historical context, rather than isolating signs of Byzantine influence as the end goal of study of the artist.[44]

In more recent literature, Debra Pincus, Hans Belting, and Michele Bacci have offered more nuanced analyses of Paolo Veneziano's pictorial style. These authors maintain Muraro's focus on his style as a response to historical conditions. They do so, however, without the emotional inflection that characterized Miess and Muraro's analyses. Pincus's series of essays focus on Andrea Dandolo's agency as a patron.[45] Like Lazarev and Pallucchini, she affirms a sense of intention for the pictorial style of fourteenth-century Venetian art. Her reading of the pictorial style of Paolo Veneziano's era is political. She interprets the style of the mosaics executed for the chapel of Sant' Isidoro and the Baptistery under Andrea Dandolo as a new, idealized synthesis that asserts the independence and sovereignty of the Venetian state.[46] Belting comes to a similar conclusion in a pair of essays that also focus on Andrea Dandolo's state commissions.[47] He reprises Lazarev's observation that the Venetian engagement with Byzantine

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[44] Muraro's monograph is also an exercise in connoisseurship. The volume is accompanied by two categories of attribution lists, including works that he considered to be autograph or by the workshop, and attributions to other artists. Filippo Pedrocco maintained connoisseurship as his focus in his 2003 monograph.

[45] See Debra Pincus, "Andrea Dandolo and Visible History: The San Marco Projects," in *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy, 1250–1500,* ed. Charles Rosenberg, 191–206 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice: Venetian State Imagery in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially chapters 8, "The Doge and the Franciscans: the Tomb of Francesco Dandolo in the Chapter House of the Frari" and 9, "The Doge in the Divine Plan: Andrea Dandolo's Program for San Marco;" see also "Venice and its Doge in the Grand Design: Andrea Dandolo and the Fourteenth-Century Mosaics of the Baptistery," in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice,* ed. Henry Maguire and Robert Nelson, 245–271 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010.

[46] Pincus, "Andrea Dandolo and Visible History," 198.

[47] See Hans Belting, "Bisanzio a Venezia non è Bisanzio a Bisanzio," in *Il Trecentro adriatico*, 71–79; and "Dandolo's Dreams: Venetian State Art and Byzantium," in *Byzantium: Faith and*

art is not an instance of looking back to a historical precedent, but an adaptation of the

contemporary production of one of Venice's rivals on the world stage. He describes the Venetian

engagement with Byzantine art as a "translation," not unlike the movement of Saint Mark's

relics from Alexandria to Venice. Ultimately, this act of translation asserts the Venetian state's

parity with Byzantium, its former overlord.

The contributions of Michele Bacci make possible new approaches to Paolo Veneziano

that are less burdened by the old habits of generalized style history.[48] Bacci introduces a study of

fourteenth-century patronage documents in the Venetian colony of Crete with an insightful

historiography of the twentieth-century scholarship. The modern era's political upheaval

encouraged, even if subconsciously, Italian scholars' quest for a national stylistic identity in the

face of the country's historic regionalism. Bacci concludes that as long as "stylistic coherence is

perceived as a symptom of a people's collective sensibility, stylistically mixed artworks have

almost no chance of being considered as creations deserving examination on art historical

grounds."[49] He notes the colonialist lens that inflected Sergio Bettini's 1933 study of the Veneto-

Byzantine school.[50] Bettini assumed that the communities of Greek painters who emigrated to

Venice after the fall of the Byzantine Empire had been present in large numbers since the

fourteenth century. This view establishes a value hierarchy, ascribing that status of an original

synthesis to Venetian painters such as Paolo or Lorenzo Veneziano (doc. 1356–1372). The

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Power (1261–1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture, ed. Sara Brooks, 138–153 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006).

[48] Michele Bacci, "Veneto-Byzantine 'Hybrids': Towards a Reassessment," *Studies in Iconography* 35 (2014): 73–107.

[49] Bacci, 77.

[50] See Bacci, 76 and Sergio Bettini, *La pittura di icone cretese-veneziane e i madonneri* (Padua: CEDAM, 1933).

Greek-trained painters were seen by Bettini as having maintained their tradition's established norms, occasionally incorporating lessons learned from their western counterparts.[51]

The strength of Bacci's analysis of fourteenth-century Crete lies in his description of culturally hybrid styles as a response to the relationship between the "social actors" of artist, patron, and audience.[52] He gives examples that illustrate a great variety of patronage relationships in the Venetian sphere.[53] As early as 1331, a Greek painter was engaged as an apprentice in the workshop of a Venetian master in Candia. In 1371, a Venetian resident commissioned an Orthodox priest and painter to decorate his private chapel in a similar manner to a nearby eastern rite church. In 1353, a Venetian painter working on the island was commissioned to decorate a church dedicated to the Pantocrator with the subjects prescribed by an orthodox monk. The documents do not include language that describes the cultural identity of any given group. Any stylistic hybridity that was present in fourteenth-century Venetian art was due to the meeting of the patron's desire with the artist's particular capabilities. The agents of artist and patron were operative in a social structure that was simultaneously based in different cultural contexts. Numerous examples, such as the Monopoli polyptych in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts that is dated ca. 1400, demonstrate that Byzantine and Venetian pictorial styles were not necessarily seen as discordant by fourteenth-century viewers.[54] The only document contemporary to Paolo that involves a detailed description of his workshop, which will be discussed in detail in the following pages, makes no mention of its relationship to Byzantine

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[51] Bacci, "Veneto-Byzantine Hybrids," 78.
[52] Bacci, 88.
[53] See Bacci, 84 for the examples cited in this paragraph.
[54] Bacci, "Veneto-Byzantine Hybrids," 94.

painting. In fact, the only stylistic descriptor used in the document associates the workshop with

northern Europe.

The studies summarized thus far are focused either on connoisseurship or pictorial style.

Andrea De Marchi and Cristina Guarnieri are the most prolific voices in a new generation of

scholarship. With her articles on Paolo Veneziano's panel painting for the tomb of Francesco

Dandolo, monumental crucifixes, and Venetian folding reliquary altarpieces, Guarnieri has

effectively illuminated how important objects by Paolo Veneziano interacted with their original

display contexts.[55] Andrea De Marchi and Robert Gibbs have considered the possibility that

Paolo and members of his family workshop also produced frescoes in the Veneto region.[56]

Silvija Banic has expertly covered the series of embroidered altar frontals that were designed by

Paolo.[57]

In addition to these studies, which consider how works by Paolo were displayed in their

original contexts, there is a group of recent contributions that examines the ornamental design

and material qualities of Paolo Veneziano's works. A special issue of *Arte Veneta* edited by

Andrea De Marchi in 2014 focused on the use of gold in fourteenth-century Venetian painting.[58]

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[55] See Cristina Guarnieri, "Il monumento funebre di Francesco Dnadolo," 151–62; Guarnieri, "Per la restituzione di due croci perdute di Paolo Venezano: il leone marciano del Museo Correr e i dolenti della Galleria Sabauda," in *Medioevo adriatico: circolazione di modelli, opere, maestri,* ed. Federica Toniolo and Giovanna Valenzano, 133–58 (Rome: Viella, 2010); and Guarnieri, "Lo svelamento rituale," 39–53.

[56] Andrea De Marchi, "Due fregi misconosciuti e il problema del tramezzo in San Fermo Maggiore a Verona," in *Arredi liturgici e architettura,* ed. Arturo Quintavalle and Andrea De Marchi, 129–142 (Milan: Electa, 2007); Robert Gibbs, "A Fresco by Marco or Paolo Veneziano in Treviso," *Studi Trevisani* 1 (1984): 27–31.

[57] Silvija Banić, "Zadarski gotički vezeni antependij u Budimpešti," Ars Adriatica 4 (2014): 75–94.

[58] Andrea De Marchi, "La ricezione dell'oro. Una chiave di lettura per la storia della pittura veneziana dal Duecento al tardogotico," *Arte Veneta* 71 (2014): 9-35. The most important contribution in this volume was made by Roberta Maria Salvador, "Girali e racimoli: Paolo Veneziano e la definizione di un canone nella decorazione dei nimbi," *Arte veneta* 71 (2014):

In this volume, Manlio Leo Mezzacasa recognized that Paolo Veneziano's standard halo design closely resembled the tradition of metalwork known as Venetian filigree.[59] This observation puts Paolo Veneziano's panel paintings in dialog with the contemporaneous production of works in other media. Where previous studies used analyses of pictorial style to present Paolo Veneziano as the ultimate representative of Venice's multicultural legacy as a trade center and heir to the Byzantine Empire, they did little to investigate how Paolo Veneziano's work engaged with the contemporary environment of fourteenth-century Venice, and how visual dialogs across media established his works as efficacious devotional images.

The role of ornament in Paolo Veneziano's works is a matter that is perhaps just as fraught as the question of Byzantine influence. The intricate frame designs have led some scholars to describe Paolo's works in a negative light. Henk van Os, for example, saw the frame of the Santa Chiara Polyptych merely as a distraction.[60] Anne Markham Schulz,[61] Andrea De Marchi,[62] and Nathaniel Silver discuss the ways that Venetian workshop practices afforded a notable degree of agency to the carvers of Venetian altarpiece frames.[63] Their work begins to

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101–25; Salvador noticed a change in the punchmarks in Paolo's surviving oeuvre. A three-pronged tool seems to have been introduced into the workshop in 1349, as none of the securely dated works produced before that year show evidence of the tool.

[59] Manlio Leo Mezzacasa, "Temi d'ornato e microtecniche nell' oreficeria gotica veneziana a paragone con le arti maggiori," *Arte veneta* (2014): 199–223.

[60] Henk van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces, 1215–1460: Form, Content, Function* (Groningen: Bouma's, 1984), 75. This quote will be discussed in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

[61] Anne Markham Schulz, *Woodcarving and Woodcarvers in Venice, 1350–1550* (Florence: Centro Di, 2011).

[62] Andrea De Marchi, "Polyptyques vénitiens: anamnèse d'une identité méconnue," in *Autour de Lorenzo Venezinao: fragments de polyptyqes vénitiens du XIVe siècle,* ed. Andrea De Marchi and Cristina Guarnieri, 12–43 (Tours: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2005).

[63] Nathaniel Silver, "'magna ars de talibus tabulis et figuris': Reframing Panel Painting as Venetian Commodity in the Tre and Quattrocento," in *Typical Venice: Venetian Commodities, 13th–16th Centuries,* ed. Philippe Cordez and Ella Sophie, 69–85 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

suggest how the microarchitectural frame of an imposing polyptych could be a crucial component for articulating the work's meaning. Writing in 2014, Devis Valenti emphasized the importance of the shell lunette in the altarpiece designs of Paolo Veneziano and subsequent generations of Venetian painters' workshops.[64] Valenti connects the shell lunette to its symbolic legacy in early Christianity and notes its prominence in the environment of San Marco. The motif's legacy as a Christian symbol and marker of local identity in Venice accounts for its longstanding popularity in Venetian polyptych designs. Michele Bacci traces the afterlife of the motif further, accounting for its diffusion throughout the Levant in succeeding centuries. Bacci cites documents written on behalf of both eastern and western patrons that describe the carved and gilded ornaments as a means to make the sacred image more "decorous and honorable."[65] This dissertation takes the approach of the latest generation of scholarship by De Marchi, Guarnieri, and Bacci. It focuses on the Santa Chiara Polyptych to investigate the work's relationship to its original display context and how contemporary developments in religious history, architectural design, and the decorative arts contributed to the altarpiece's iconography and ornament.

The first chapter examines the Santa Chiara Polyptych in light of the history of the convent for which it was commissioned and the typologies of objects created for Franciscan devotional contexts. The second chapter parses the polyptych's iconography in detail, relating the representations to Franciscan devotional literature. The third chapter focuses on the detailed depictions of textiles seen in the polyptych, which are representative of Paolo's approach

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[64] Devis Valenti, "Alle origini del polittico veneziano: il motivo a conchiglia," in *Aldebaran II: storia dell'arte,* ed. Sergio Marinelli, 25–54 (Milan: Fondazione Trivulzio, 2014).
[65] Bacci, "Gothic-Framed Byzantine Icons: Italianate Ornament in the Levant During the Late Middle Ages," in *Histories of Ornament: from Global to Local,* ed. Gulru Necipoglu and Alina Payne, 106–115 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), 114.

throughout his chronology. The textiles are specific and accurate representations of the luxury silks that reached Venice through the global trade networks of the late medieval world. The chapter demonstrates how aspects of this social context made the textiles fitting clothing for the holy figures represented in the altarpiece. The fourth chapter involves a shift from the painted representations to the three-dimensional object of the polyptych itself. It considers how the altarpiece interacted with its historical display context by relating its design to the tradition of choir screens in Italian churches, ultimately suggesting a potential display context for the polyptych. The fifth chapter enumerates the specific details of the ornamental design of the polytptych's frame, relating these motifs to contemporary examples in architecture and metalwork, thereby integrating Paolo Veneziano's altarpiece with the contemporary visual culture of fourteenth-century Venice.

As an antidote to the generations of debate and speculation about chronology and authorship status that characterize the twentieth-century scholarship, the final pages of this introduction will feature a brief overview of Paolo Veneziano's life as illustrated by his securely dated works and the information available in historical documents. An important reference for the artist is a memorandum written in 1335 by a notary from Treviso, Oliviero Forzetta (ca. 1300–1373). It will be referred to frequently in the summary of Paolo's life before being discussed in detail following the biographical sketch.

Scholars have hypothesized a birthdate of circa 1290 for Paolo Veneziano.[66] The documentary record shows that Paolo Veneziano participated in a multigenerational family painters' workshop. An epithet in the record of a property sale in Treviso and a notary's

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[66] See Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 2003 and Miklós Boskovits, "Paolo Veneziano: riflessioni sul percorso (Parte I)," *Arte Cristiana* 47, 851 (2009): 81.

memorandum indicate that Paolo's father Martino and brother Marco also practiced the trade.

Paolo later worked together with his sons Luca and Giovanni, as noted in two signature

inscriptions. Another son Marco, and possibly a fourth, Gregorio, appear in the documentary

record.[67] Approximately thirty extant works are attributed to Paolo Veneziano.[68] Three panels

from the high altarpiece of the Franciscan church of San Lorenzo in Vicenza bear the inscription,

"MCCCXXIII PAULUS D(E) VENECIIS PI(N)XIT H(O)C OPUS [1333 Paul of Venice

Painted This Work]." The central panel features the Dormition of the Virgin (fig. 11). The

prominence of the commission indicates that by this date Paolo was an established painter whose

reputation extended to nearby cities. Several objects have been suggested as potential early

works by the artist that predate the 1333 inscription. These include the donor figures on the relief

icon of San Donato dated to 1310 by an inscription,[69] now in Venice's Museo Diocesano (fig.

12), and the small scenes of the Life of the Virgin in Pesaro.[70]

The Forzetta memorandum notes that both Paolo and his brother Marco lived near the

Franciscan church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in 1335. In 1339, Doge Francesco Dandolo

was buried in this institution's chapter house; Paolo Veneziano painted the lunette-shaped panel

that adorned the ruler's tomb. In 1339, Paolo sold property in Treviso that he had inherited from

the dowry of his wife, Caterina Baldoino.[71] Paolo is named as "Master Paolo the painter, son of

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[67] Robert Gibbs, "Paolo Veneziano," in *The Dictionary of Art,* ed. Jane Turner, vol. 24, 29–34 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[68] Both Muraro and Pedrocco's monographs include catalog raisonés. Muraro's catalog has sixty-seven entries, while Pedrocco narrows the list to thirty-one works. Pedrocco includes only extant panel paintings while Muraro includes works in other media and objects mentioned in documents that have not survived.

[69] Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento*, 8.

[70] Murao, *Paolo da Venezia,* 164; and Flores d'Arcais, ed., *Trecento adriatico,* 146–7, cat. no., 22.

[71] See Luciano Gargan, *Cultura e arte nel Veneto al tempo del Petrarca* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1978), 59–61 for more on this notarial act.

the late Martino the painter of the *contrada* of San Luca in Venice [magister Paulus pictor filius quondam Martini pictoris de contrata Sancti Luche de Veneciis]" in the notarial act that records the sale. At this stage, Paolo appears to be an independent master in charge of his own workshop. The contrada of San Luca was the neighborhood with the greatest concentration of painters' workshops where the headquarters of their guild was located.[72] An eclectic group of individuals who were present to witness the sale attests to the multicultural, interdisciplinary nature of Paolo's environment.[73] In addition to the Trevisan notary Gabriele Villa, a painter from the same city named Marco del fu Gabriele Villa was present, as was the Venetian painter Marco son of Corto, and a surgeon, Paolo of Mantova. A maker of cloths likely of Greek origin, "Antonio called Paparotolo," is also named in the document.

The fact that he created the panel painting for the tomb of Venice's ruler, Doge Francesco Dandolo, who died in 1339, suggests that Paolo was regarded as a preeminent painter by this time.[74] Such a prestigious commission indicates a high degree of renown. His reputation would continue to rise throughout the 1340s. In 1342, the *Ufficiali allo estraordinario,* or special customs agents, provided a "ser Paulus pinctor" with a year's salary for making the processional thrones that carried actors dressed as the Virgin and the Angel Gabriel in the annual civic festival of the *Marie.* Michelangelo Muraro interpreted this document as evidence that Paolo could be considered from this point onwards the *pittore di stato* of Venice.[75]

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[72] Frederic Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 116.
[73] Gargan, *Cultura e arte nel Veneto al tempo del Petrara,* 60.
[74] Guarnieri, "Il monumento funebre di Francesco Dandolo," 151–62.
[75] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 83.

In 1343, the procurators of San Marco allocated the immense sum of 400 ducats for the renovation of the church's high altar.[76] This was a part of an extensive patronage campaign at San Marco by the doge Andrea Dandolo. Paolo Veneziano contributed to the campaign by painting the *Pala Feriale,* the weekday cover for the high altarpiece known as the *Pala d'Oro,* or altarpiece of gold. Following his work for San Marco, Paolo painted an altarpiece for a chapel dedicated to Saint Nicholas inside the Doge's Palace.[77] Paolo Veneziano's repeated work for San Marco and the Doge's Palace, sites at the center of Venetian rule, support Muraro's conclusion that the artist was seen as the official state painter. The opportunity to create a work for San Marco's high altar likely encouraged Paolo to emphasize his continuing family legacy in this context. He included his sons Luca and Giovanni in the lengthy signature inscription.[78] It bears the date of 1345.

A series of important works demonstrate the geographic range of Paolo's fame. A monumental crucifix that once stood over the rood screen of Dubrovnik's Dominican monastery is still displayed in the church for which it was commissioned.[79] The will of a local patron, Simun Rastic, stipulated funds for this kind of object in 1348.[80] In 1352, another resident of

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[76] Muraro, 47, 83.

[77] Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento*, 39–40. Pallucchini was the first to associate this document with the two panels in the Uffizi Galleries' Contini Bonacosi Collection.

[78] See Rona Goffen, "Il paliotto della Pala d'Oro di Paolo Veneziano e la committenza del doge Andrea Dandolo," in *San Marco: aspetti storici e agiografici: atti del convegno internazionale di studi veneziani, April 1994,* ed. Antonio Niero, 313–34 (Venice: Marsilio, 1996); and Julian Gardner, "From Gold Altar to Gold Altarpiece: the Pala d'Oro, the Pala Feriale, and Paolo Veneziano," in *Encountering the Renaissance: Celebrating Gary M. Radke and 50 Years of the Syracuse University Graduate Program,* ed. Molly Bourne and A. Victor Coonin, 259–79 (Ramsey, N.J.: WAPACC, 2016).

[79] See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 108; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 2003, no. 19/1; Grgo Gamulin, "Un crocifisso di Maestro Paolo ed altri due del Trecento," *Arte Veneta* 19 (1965) 32–43; and Guarnieri, "Per la restituzione di due croci perdute di Paolo Veneziano," 133–158.

[80] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 3

Dubrovnik, Nikola Lukaric, commissioned an altarpiece from "Master Paolo, Venetian painter." The work, which has not survived, must have been especially sumptuous, as the stipulated funds were significantly greater than the amount left by Simun Rastic for both the Crucifix and an altarpiece with the Maestà.[81] Dubrovnik was under Venetian control at the time of the commissions, and it would remain so until the city accepted nominal rule by the King of Hungary in 1358. Paolo Veneziano was evidently a sought-after master also in cities that were connected to Venice by ties other than political subordination. Venice was the center of a trade economy that united the cities and regions along the Italian shores of the Adriatic.[82] Even in an inland town like San Severino Marche, local merchants were engaged in trade with Venetian markets. Commercial ties likely inspired the local Dominican community to commission a monumental polyptych from Paolo Veneziano.[83]

The San Severino polyptych is the last of Paolo's signed and dated works.[84] The central panel of the altarpiece is now in the Frick Collection, New York (fig. 10). The inscription beneath the throne reads, "MCCCLVIII / PAULUS CUM / IOHANNINUS EIUS(S) / FILIUS / PI(NX)SERUNT HOC OPUS [1358 Paolo with his son Giovannino painted this work]."[85] The absence of Paolo's other son Luca's name in the inscription may indicate that he had died in intervening years, perhaps a casualty of the plague in 1348. The *terminus ante quem* for Paolo's death is taken from a document that fines Paolo's third son, Marco, for brawling with

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[81] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 84.

[82] Francesca Flores d'Arcais, "La diffusione delle opere d'arte veneziane nell'area centro adriatico nel Trecento," in *Civiltà urbana e committenze artistiche al tempo del Maestro di Offida,* ed. Silvia Maddalo et. al., 301–17 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2013).

[83] Raoul Paciaroni, *Il polittico sanseverinate di Paolo Veneziano* (San Severino: Città di San Severino Marche, 2018), 54.

[84] Flores d'Arcais, ed., *Trecento adriatico,* 166–7, cat. no., 31.

[85] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 116–7; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* no. 30.

fishermen.[86] The document describes Marco as the son of the late master Paolo, painter. Paolo's only documented pupil besides his sons is Nikola Ciprijanov, a painter of Dalmatian origin.[87] In a document from 1366, he was granted Venetian citizenship for his military service in the war of 1351 against Genoa.[88] The document notes that he was trained as a painter for five years in Paolo's workshop.

An artist now known as the master of the Washington Coronation for the panel in the National Gallery of Art, was an early contemporary of Paolo Veneziano. Scholars have hypothesized that this figure was either Paolo's father Martino, or his older brother Marco, or someone unaffiliated with the family workshop.[89] The designation is derived from the panel in Washington's National Gallery mentioned in the opening pages of this introduction and bears the date of 1324.[90] In addition to the Washington Panel which bears the date of 1324, eight works formerly attributed to Paolo have been assigned to this master in the more recent scholarship.[91]The works attributed to the Master of the Washington Coronation represent the dominant style in Venice during the period of Paolo Veneziano's artistic formation.

Beyond the works themselves, a precious document attests to the cultural climate in which Paolo Veneziano lived and worked. The document in question is a memorandum written in 1335 by the notary Oliviero Forzetta. Forzetta was a collector of art and manuscripts who had a noted interest in the classical world. In 1335, he was ready to conclude his affairs in Venice

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[86] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 84.

[87] Pallucchini, *Pittura Veneziana del Trecento,* 8; and Josip Belamarić et. al., *The Gothic Century on the Adriatic: Painting in the Perspective of Paolo Veneziano and His Followers* (Zagreb: Galerija Klovcevi dvori, 2004), 14.

[88] Belamarić et. al., *The Gothic Century on the Adriatic,* 14.

[89] See Guarnieri, "dal Maestro dell'Incoronazione a Paolo Veneziano," 153–201 for a summary of the questions attendant to this figure.

[90] Boskovits Di Resta, *Italian Paintings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,* 301–2.

[91] Guarnieri, "dal Maestro dell'Incoronazione a Paolo Veneziano," 155–6, n. 9–11.

before returning to his hometown.[92] His departure required a settling of accounts. The summary

of unresolved transactions involves a catalog of objects new and old that gives a sense of the

elite atmosphere in which Paolo Veneziano worked. Forzetta made a note to see his contacts in

the Dominican Order for works of classical and patristic literature, including the complete works

of Seneca, Thomas Aquinas's commentaries on Aristotle, and works by Ovid, Cicero, and Livy,

among others. Forzetta was focused on tracking down the possessions of Gioacchino Perenzolo

(likely as collateral for a loan) a deceased painter for whom the memorandum is the only known

documentation. In particular, Forzetta was looking for the painter's book of animal studies and

his collection of ancient sculpture, including a marble relief of four putti. The marble relief is the

only object from the document that is still extant; today it is a part of the historic collections of

Venice's Museo Archeologico.[93] Among Forzetta's creditors is a goldsmith to whom he owes

payment for images of Christ and St. Luke. The goldsmith's name, Giovanni Teutonico, points to

northern origins. Paolo Veneziano is mentioned only as an afterthought to his brother, Marco.

Forzetta's primary observation concerning the family workshop is that its products were

associated with northern European art:

> Remember further that Master Marco the painter, who lives near the convent of the Frati
> Minori, painted some pictures on cloth in the Teutonic manner for the Church of San
> Francesco dei Frati Minori in Treviso. Some linens painted in the same manner are in the
> church of the Frati Minori in Venice; in the same place are also some windows painted by
> the said master, and painted well. A certain Teutonic friar, in fact, some time ago did
> works of that sort in Venice, and Master Marco copied them and sent them to Treviso.
> Remember also that the above-mentioned Master Marco the painter, who lives near the
> Church of Santa Maria dei Frati Minori in Venice, has a brother, also a painter, whose

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[92] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 23–25, 74–76, notes. 54-80; see also Luciano Gargan, "Un bibliofilo trevigiano contemporaneo del Petrarca: Oliviero Forzetta," in *Storia della Cultura Veneta: il Trecento,* vol. 2, ed. Gianfranco Folena, 168-170 (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1976).
[93] Luciano Gargan, "Oliviero Forzetta e la nascita del collezionismo nel Veneto," in *La Pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento,* ed. Mauro Lucco, vol. 2, 503–17 (Milan: Electa 1992), 503; see also Luigi Sperti, *Rilievi greci e romani del Museo Archeologico di Venezia* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1988), 120-25, nos. 37–38.

name is Paolo and who lives in Venice near the same church; he has made two drawings on paper: the Death of Saint Francis and the Death of the Glorious Virgin, which are similar to the works painted on linen in the Teutonic manner at San Francesco in Treviso.[94]

Et nota quod Mag. Marcus Pictor, qui moratur poenes locum Fratrum Minorum, fecit pannos theutonicos, qui sunt Tarvisii ad Sanctum Franciscum Minorum; qui panni sunt Picti etiam Venetiis in loco Fr. Minorum et sunt ibi Fenestre vitree, facte manu dicti Magistri et bene facte. Nam quidam Frater Theutonicus fecit omnia ab antiquo ibi in Venetiis, et Magister Marcus exemplavit, et misit Tarvisium; et nota quod sopradictus Mag. Marcus Pictor qui moratur penes Sanctam Mariam Fratrum Minorum de Venetiis habet unum Fratrem nomine Paulum Pictorem, qui moratur poenes dictam Sanctam Mariam Fr. Minorum: qui habet in carta designatam mortem Sancti Francisci et Virginis gloriose, sicut picte sunt ad modo Theutonicum in panno ad locum Min. In Tarvisio.[95]

The language of the document does not specify exactly what aspect of these objects led Forzetta to describe them as "cloths in the German manner." Michelangelo Muraro associates the objects with the northern tradition of monochrome paintings on unprepared cloth created for display in churches during holy week.[96] A late fourteenth-century example of this tradition is the *Parement de Narbonne in the Louvre* (fig. 13).[97] He excludes the possibility of tapestries, noting that woven pictorial hangings tended to be named with a specific designation in historical documents.[98]

It is also possible that the "cloths in the German manner" mentioned in the Forzetta document were embroideries.[99] The embroidery banner of Santa Fosca in the Museo Provinciale

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[94] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 23–4.
[95] Muraro, 82–3.
[96] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 75, n. 73.
[97] Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters: Silk Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings, 1300–1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 43; see also Susie Nash, "The Parement de Narbonne, Context and Technique," in *The Fabric of Images, European Paintings on Fabric Supports, 1300–1500,* ed. Caroline Villers, 77–87 (London: Archetype Publications, 2000).
[98] Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 75, n. 73. Muraro notes that in the will of Elisabetta Dandolo, tapestries are called "carpeta" and "banchalia francisca."
[99] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 75, n. 73.

di Torcello is described as "pictus" in contemporary documents, the same verb used by Forzetta.[100] The three surviving embroidered altar frontals associated with Paolo Veneziano's workshop feature frameworks of ornamental architecture.[101] The design of these objects, which feature narrative scenes contained in Gothic architectural frames, are consistent with examples produced in Florence and north of the Alps.[102] In the Krk altar frontal, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, six saints stand within pointed arches on either side of a wide central arch containing the Coronation of the Virgin (fig. 14). The protagonists' traditional attributes of the Sun and Moon are contained within the spandrels of the arches on either side of the central scene. The remaining liminal space available in the framing architecture is filled with a dense maze of foliate ornament. In light of historical descriptions that associate intricate ornamental forms with goldsmiths and painters from beyond the Alps, it is possible that Forzetta could have had ornamental styles in mind when he associated the workshop with the instruction of a Teutonic friar. Whether it was a matter of material, technique, or ornament, it is sufficient to emphasize that one of the few historical documents associated with the Paolo Veneziano's family workshop describes its artists as having learned from a master who came from beyond the Alps. For Oliviero Forzetta, this legacy of instruction was the workshop's distinguishing quality.

The memorandum also emphasizes the workshop's affiliation with the Franciscan Order. The brothers Marco and Paolo lived close to its principal establishment in Venice, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. They created works for this institution and for Franciscan houses in other

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[100] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 75, n. 73..

[101] Banić, "Zadarski gotički vezeni antependij u Budimpešti," 75–94.

[102] Pauline Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church: The Place of Church Vestments in the History of Art from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Leeds: Maney, 2002), 53–54 and Anne Wardwell, "A Rare Florentine Embroidery of the Fourteenth Century," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 66, 9 (1979): 95–173.

cities. Two important works by Paolo, namely the Vicenza altarpiece and the Santa Chiara Polyptych, feature the subjects cited by Forzetta. The document is also a reminder that the workshop's practice was not limited to panel paintings. Marco's involvement with stained glass production at the Frari lends credibility to the attribution of a stained-glass window in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi to the Master of the Washington Coronation.[103] In a similar vein, correspondences in ornamental details have been the basis for attributing some important illuminated manuscripts to Paolo.[104] Muraro maintained that, as *pittore di stato*, Paolo would have designed the mosaics for the baptistery of San Marco commissioned by Andrea Dandolo.[105] Other scholars have recently attributed frescoes in Verona and Treviso to the workshop.[106]

While the existing scholarship has made note of Paolo Veneziano's engagement with northern art and the repeated commissions he received from the Franciscans, both of these aspects of Paolo's career will benefit from greater emphasis.[107] For its intricate design and largely intact original frame, the Santa Chiara Polyptych is among Paolo's most important works. The polyptych's iconography signals its provenance from a convent of the Second Franciscan Order, more commonly known as the Clarissans. In the chapters that follow the polyptych's relationship to Franciscan devotional culture and the wider visual culture of

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[103] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 75, n. 74 and Frank Martin. *Le vetrate di San Francesco in Assisi: nascita e sviluppo di un genere artistico in Italia* (Perugia: Casa Editrice Francescana, 1998).
[104] Lyle Humphrey, *Le miniature per le confraternite e le arti veneziani: Mariegole dal 1260 al 1460* (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 2015), 111.
[105] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 26, 123–24.
[106] De Marchi, "Due fregi misconosciuti e il problema del tramezzo in San Fermo Maggiore," 129–142; Gibbs, "A Fresco by Marco or Paolo Veneziano in Treviso," 27–31.
[107] Julian Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," in *I fondi oro della Collezione Alberto Crespi al Museo Diocesano di Milano: questioni iconografiche e attributive, atti della giornata di studi, 11 ottobre 2004,* ed. Museo Diocesano di Milano, 16–24 (Milan: Silvana, 2009), 16. Gardner opines, "the possibility that northern Gothic might be a component of Paolo's style has passed wholly unrecognized."

fourteenth-century Venice will structure a case study of the polyptych. Specific details in the polyptych that have either been the subject of debate or escaped notice will provide new approaches to the object itself and the art of Paolo Veneziano as a whole.

1. Paolo Veneziano and the Local Traditions of Franciscan Devotion

In its current state of preservation, the Santa Chiara Polyptych features fifteen narrative scenes and six individual representations of prophets and evangelists (fig. 4). Alongside questions of attribution and chronology, twentieth-century authors' principal concern is the polyptych's format. In the English translation of his monograph, Michelangelo Muraro describes the form as "noteworthy, half-way between that of a Byzantine altarpiece and a polyptych in the Gothic tradition."[108] Writing in 2003, Filippo Pedrocco took a similar approach. He notes the polyptych's "unusual form, constituting a sort of contamination between the Byzantine style panel, with the stories of a saint arranged at the sides of the central image and the Gothic polyptych, with the procession of saints arranged to the left and right of the central scene [ha una forma insolita, costituendo una sorta di contaminazione tra il paliotto di stampo bizantino, con le storie di un santo collocate ai lati dell'immagine centrale, e il politico gotico, con la teoria di santi posti a destra e a sinistra della scena centrale]."[109] Rather than depending upon such schematic designations from a generalized history of style, this chapter will consider the altarpiece's format and narrative content in light of Franciscan devotional culture, specifically a group of objects produced in Venice and the surrounding region. The polyptych's design is an intentional response to this tradition, rather than a passive intermingling of broadly generalized object types from east and west.

A description of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's design and iconography will serve as a basis for an analysis of the altarpiece's relationship to earlier objects created for Franciscan contexts. The polyptych's narrative scenes, prophets, and evangelists are painted on seven

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[108] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 128.
[109] Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 121, no. 7, 121.

separate panels. The ensemble of panels is united within a complex gilded microarchitecture made up of spiral columns, triforate arches, and pointed finials. Three different but related iconographies come together within the polyptych's organizational scheme. Shifts in scale indicate the relative importance of each narrative thread. The largest central panel represents the Coronation of the Virgin. Eight scenes from the Life of Christ are arranged in two groups of four on either side of the central panel. The narrative progresses from left to right and top to bottom on each side. Except for the Nativity and Baptism, the narrative sequence is focused on Christ's Passion and Resurrection. Wearing a blue robe that shines with the gold striations of Byzantine-style chrysography, the Virgin is present at the key moments of the Nativity, the Road to Calvary, the Crucifixion, and the Ascension. The Christological sequence is the Virgin's story as much as it is Christ's. Postures of kneeling and swooning, together with gestures of raised or clasped hands emphasize the pathos of her relationship to the sacrificial son of God. The Virgin's story merges with Christ's in the triumphal scene where she is crowned queen of heaven in the central panel.

The polyptych's third and final shift in scale occurs in the topmost register, where a series of four scenes feature saints Francis and Clare. The Franciscan sequence is shown between two important moments from Biblical narrative: Pentecost initiates the sequence at the left, and the Last Judgment concludes it to the right. Each register's variation in scale reinforces the altarpiece's iconographic content. The work's focus is the triumphal narrative of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, supported by the Virgin's submission to the will of God and the suffering that came with it. Represented on a smaller scale in the elaborate aedicules of the topmost register, the stories of Francis and Clare support the triumphal narrative of Christ and the Virgin below. A story from recent history - the deeds of the order's founders - offers an

exhortative gloss on Christianity's central message. Narrative is the driving force that unites the altarpiece's images. The stories of Francis, Clare, Christ, and the Virgin feed into the central triumphal scene.

A series of objects created for Franciscan contexts in the Venetian sphere provide a backdrop against which to evaluate for the Santa Chiara Polyptych's complex design. They feature ensembles of individual scenes organized by microarchitectural frameworks that inspire reflection on Franciscan and Christian narrative. Two works in particular, a high altarpiece and a panel painting for a ruler's tomb, are evidence of Paolo's close relationship with Franciscan patrons.

The association between Paolo's family workshop and the Franciscans noted by Oliviero Forzetta is easily discernible in the high altarpiece that Paolo created for the Franciscan church of San Lorenzo in Vicenza. The altarpiece is dated to 1333 by a signature inscription (fig. 11). It was likely commissioned following the extensive renovation of the church which lasted from 1280 to 1315.[110] Today, only three of its panels survive including two panels with full-length figures of saints Francis and Anthony and a panel showing the *Dormition* that are displayed in Vicenza's Museo Civico, Palazzo Chiericati.[111] The Franciscan saints would have likely been joined by other figures important to the order, potentially Clare and Louis of Toulouse.[112] Comparison to Paolo Veneziano's large-scale altarpieces for the churches of San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna and Santa Maria del Mercato in San Severino Marche suggest that the

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[110] Mauro Lucco, "Vicenza," in *La pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento,* vol. 1, ed. Mauro Lucco, 272–302 (Milan: Electa, 1992), 278.
[111] Avagnina et. al., *Pinacoteca Civica di Vicenza,* cat. no. 1.
[112] Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 276.

altarpiece for San Lorenzo would have likely included at least two more saints, one of whom would certainly have been the church's dedicatee, Saint Lawrence.

The altarpiece represents one of the two object categories mentioned by Muraro: it is the Gothic polyptych with a procession of saints on either side of the central image. It is evidence of the networks that contributed to the spread of particular image types and iconographies in the service of Franciscan ideals. In it, the figure of Saint Francis holds a book with two inscriptions. The first inscription, which reads "Ego enim Stigmata Domini Ihesu Xristi Corpore meo porto [I indeed carry the Stigmata of Jesus Christ on my body]," emphasizes the centrality of the Stigmata in Francis's hagiography. The wounds visible in Francis's hands and feet are especially graphic, recalling Bonaventure's descriptions of his body after his death.[113] While not entirely legible due to paint loss, the second part of the inscription seems to commemorate the agency of a friar involved with the commission of the polyptych.[114] "Paxs" may refer to friar Pace da Lugo. He was appointed as one of the executors of the testamentary bequest left to the church about 1341 by Pietro "Nano" da Marano, an influential courtier and advisor to the Scaligeri who became wealthy as a usurer. In any case the patronage circumstances of the Vicenza altarpiece attest to Paolo's renown in the region surrounding Venice.

Pietro da Marano is commemorated with a sculpted donor portrait above the church's main portal that was rebuilt at his request in 1342. A friar from the convent of San Lorenzo assisted the Venetian sculptor Andriolo de' Santi (d. 1375) in his carving for the façade portal.

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[113] Lucco, "Verona," 277.

[114] Lucco, "Verona," 277. The inscription, as transcribed by Mauro Lucco reads, "Gratia Domini Nostri Ihesu Xristi cum Spiritu Vestro Fratres Amatissimi Quibus (?) Hanc Regulam Secuti fuerint Paxs […]." For a detailed account of Pace da Lugo's administration of Pietro da Marano's will, see Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 71–88.

Like his patron Candgrande della Scala (1291–1329), who was Lord of Vicenza in addition to

Verona, Pietro da Marano requested Venetian citizenship from doge Francesco Dandolo in

1329.[115] Choosing Paolo Veneziano for the church's high altarpiece affirmed the benefactor

Pietro da Marano's association with Venice and the doge from whom he requested citizenship.[116]

The high altarpiece was one of two polyptychs by Paolo documented in the church of San

Lorenzo in Vicenza. The second is now lost, but a piece of it was recorded in the nineteenth

century, as being in the collection of count Gerolamo Gualdo. The record indicates a panel with a

signature inscription by Paolo showing the Death of St. Francis.[117] Presumably, this panel was

originally part of an altarpiece in the chapel dedicated to Saint Francis. A probable format for the

altarpiece would have involved a central hieratic image of the saint, with a series of narrative

episodes from his life to the left and right. In format it likely resembled the intact Saint Lucy

polyptych of Krk, Croatia (fig. 8).[118] Together with the high altarpiece, which featured the

aforementioned image of the Dormition, the lost altarpiece dedicated to Saint Francis, constitutes

clear evidence that, by 1333, Paolo was sought after in cities in the surrounding region to

represent subjects that were important for the Franciscan order.

From one altarpiece to the next, Paolo strategically developed alternating arrangements of

narrative and iconic images according to the work's principal subject.[119] In the high altarpiece of

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[115] Bourdua, *Franciscans and Art Patronage,* 86.

[116] Bourdua, *Franciscans and Art Patronage,* 86. Bourdua described the Dandolo tomb lunette as a potential source for the design of Andriolo de' Santi's portal sculpture at San Lorenzo in Vicenza.

[117] Lucco, "Verona," 277.

[118] Enrica Cozzi, "Paolo Veneziano e bottega: il politico di Santa Lucia e gli antependia per l'isola di Veglia," *AFAT* 35 (2016): 235–93.

[119] See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 122, 144 and Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 2003, cat. nos. 9 and 25 for other examples of altarpieces by Paolo Veneziano for Franciscan institutions. In the Campana Polyptych in the Louvre, the Virgin and Child are enthroned in front of a cloth of honor in the central panel. The side panels include hieratic images of Saints Francis, John the

San Lorenzo, a series of hieratic images of Franciscan saints attend the miraculous gathering of

the Apostles at the Virgin's bedside that occurred shortly before her temporary death. In the lost

Saint Francis altarpiece and the intact Saint Lucy polyptych of Krk, a series of narrative scenes

on the side of the altarpiece represent the venerable action of the saint shown in the central panel

– in effect the adaptation of the Byzantine vita icon format that Pedrocco noted.

In Venice proper we find Paolo Veneziano involved in the production of a different

object type for a site that also had Franciscan connections. When doge Francesco Dandolo died

in 1339, the executors of his will chose Paolo Veneziano to create a panel painting for the ruler's

tomb.[120] The lunette-shaped panel painting was restored to its original display site in the chapter

house of the Frari in the 1930s, where it can still be viewed today (figs 15, 16). The tomb

ensemble is the most substantial evidence for Paolo Veneziano's association with the Franciscan

order and local rulers. In a panel painting that sits on top of the sarcophagus beneath a masonry

canopy, the doge and his wife, Elisabetta Contarini, are presented to the enthroned Virgin and

Child by their namesake saints, Francis and Elizabeth of Thuringia. Francesco Dandolo wears

the *corno ducale*, the brilliant red robes, and ermine of his office. His wife Elisabetta wears the

simple clothing of a Franciscan Tertiary. The front of the sarcophagus has a detailed relief

carving showing the Dormition of the Virgin. The progression from the Dormition on the

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Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Anthony. An altarpiece in Tbilisi, Georgia's Museum of Fine
Arts Shalva Amiranashvili is a later pastiche with eight side panels of hieratic saints that were
taken from an altarpiece that Paolo Veneziano evidently made for a Franciscan institution. The
presence of Francis, Anthony of Padua, Louis of Toulouse, Clare, and the Virgin martyrs
Catherine of Alexandria and Agnes are evidence of a potential Clarissan provenance. Cristina
Guarnieri recently hypothesized that the altarpiece in Tbilisi may have been an openable
altarpiece intended for the display of relics. See Guarnieri, "Lo svelamento delle reliquie e le
pale ribaltabili di Paolo Veneziano," 2020, 52–3.
[120] See chapter seven, in Pincus, *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice,* "The Doge and the
Franciscans: the Tomb of Francesco Dandolo in the Chapter House of the Frari," 105–119; see
also Guarnieri, "Il monumento funebre di Francesco Dandolo, 151–161.

sarcophagus to the Enthronement in the painted panel presents a sequence that emphasizes the

Virgin's triumph. It also evokes the Ducal family's hope for her advocacy. Whereas the Virgin,

by tradition, was afforded the special honor of ascension in her earthly body, the doge relies on

her intercession as the mother of God in the painted image. The painting privileges the hieratic

presentation of the enthroned Virgin and Child. At the same time, the votaries appear in the same

pictorial field, where the namesake saints enact a dynamic intercessory relationship. A series of

gestures articulate the relationship between Francesco Dandolo, Elisabetta Contarini, their patron

saints, and Christ. The Virgin points to the Christ child on her lap, who blesses Francesco

Dandolo. Saint Francis and Elizabeth of Thuringia place one hand on the shoulder of the votary,

and gesture to Christ and the Virgin with the other hand. The relationship that these gestures

establish invites the viewer into the depicted scenario, involving them in the intercessory

relationship.

There was meaning in the placement of the tomb within the friars' cloister. The restricted

access that the location implies conforms with the Venetian tradition that dictated modesty for

ducal tombs.[121] The tomb was placed on the same wall that held the chapter house's altar,

corresponding with the doorway through which friars entered the space from the cloister.[122] The

visual representation of the ducal family's devotion to Christ and the Virgin brought with it a

reminder for the mendicant community to include prayers for these elite dead in their daily

exercises.

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[121] Pincus, *Tombs of the Doges of Venice,* 105, Pincus notes that the will specifies burial only for Francesco and his wife, thereby insisting that this is not a family tomb, but only a commemoration of Francesco as doge; see also Guarnieri 151–152.
[122] Guarnieri, "Il monumento funebre di Doge Francesco Dandolo," 153.

The Dandolo tomb lunette is both a marker of the rise of Paolo Veneziano's reputation, and an assertion of an allegiance between Venetian rulers and the Franciscan Order. By 1339, the date of Francesco Dandolo's death, Paolo enjoyed the patronage of the ducal family. Through the commission of their portraits on the tomb lunette, Francesco and Elisabetta asserted their participation in Franciscan devotional practices in perpetuity. This example of elite participation in Franciscan life is an apt lens for considering the design and iconography of the Santa Chiara Polyptych. Using stylistic analysis, twentieth-century scholars have articulated a wide range of opinions about the dating of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.[123] Stylistic affinities between the figuration in the Santa Chiara Polyptych and the *Dormition* triptych from San Lorenzo in Vicenza suggest that an earlier date range is more likely.[124] The polyptych is representative of Paolo's development in the 1330s and early 1340s, when he came to receive increasingly important commissions, including the Dandolo tomb in 1339. This phase culminates with the Pala Feriale, dated to 1345 by a signature inscription. The Pala Feriale was a part of Andrea

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[123] Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting,* vol. 4, 7; Sandberg Vavalà, "Maestro Paolo Veneziano," 177; Longhi, *Viatico,* 140; Pallucchini, *Pittura veneziana del Trecento,* 48; Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 127–128; De Marchi, "una proposta per Marco di Paolo Veneziano," 243; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 153. The early scholars Van Marle and Sandberg Vavalà articulated divergent opinions based on stylistic analyses. Van Marle dated the polyptych early in Paolo's career for the Byzantine elements he perceived as dominant. Sandberg Vavalà, on the other hand discerned an affinity with the *Coronation of the Virgin* in The Frick Collection, Paolo's latest signed and dated work. Roberto Longhi also favored a later date range, first by comparing one of the angel musicians to Bolognese painting in the second half of the fourteenth century, and later as a demonstration of the hypothesis that a more Byzantinizing style became popular in Venice later in the century, a position reiterated by Pallucchini and championed by Muraro in his monograph. This school of thought favors a date range in the 1350s. Andrea De Marchi took a different approach, instead comparing the polyptych to the type of object realized for the major commissions of the Vicenza panels and the *Pala Feriale,* therefore proposing a date range of 1333 to 1345. Through more focused stylistic comparisons, between the Vicenza panels and a Virgin and Child enthroned in the Crespi Collection with an inscribed date of 1340, Pedrocco opines that the date range can be narrowed to between 1333 and 1336.
[124] De Marchi, "una proposta per Marco di Paolo Veneziano," 243.

Dandolo's extensive patronage campaign at the Basilica of San Marco, the site traditionally regarded as Venice's state church. The tomb lunette from the Frari is the earliest example of Paolo Veneziano receiving patronage from the Ducal family.

Like the Frari, Venice's convent of Santa Chiara, the original site of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, also benefitted from Dandolo family patronage in the 1330s and 40s. The following paragraphs will summarize the institution's history to give a sense of its longstanding affiliation with elite Venetian families. The Franciscans had been present in Venice since 1233, when the nobleman Giovanni Badoer donated a house and a plot of land to the order.[125] In 1237, Giovanni Badoer made another donation, this time in support of the Clarissans. A *sine proprio* investiture was made by Giovanni and his sisters in the name of Costanza Calbo, prioress of the Convent of S. Maria Madre di Gesù Cristo, which was then associated with the rule of Clare's original community at San Damiano.[126] The convent was located on marshland at the western edge of the city. The use of the term "priora" to describe Costanza's office in the 1237 document likely attests to the community's earlier affiliation with an Augustinian monastery on the island of Sant' Andrea near the Lido.[127]

The community was brought more definitively into the Franciscan fold with the two abbesses who succeeded Costanza, suor Aurea who arrived from the mother convent of San Damiano at Assisi in 1239, and later suor Filippa from Cremona.[128] The beginning of Filippa's leadership coincided with the consecration of the church, at which time the community included

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[125] Fernanda Sorelli, "I nuovi religiosi: note sull'insediamento degli ordini mendicanti," in *La chiesa di Venezia nei secoli XII–XIII,* ed. Franco Tomon, 135–152 (Venice: Edizioni Studium Catolico Veneziano, 1988), 136; see also Nicolò Spada, "Le origini del Monastero di S. Chiara," *Le Venezie Francescane* 11 (1933): 92–103.

[126] Spada, "Le origini del Monastero di S. Chiara," 93.

[127] Spada, "Origini del Monastero di S. Chiara," 98.

[128] Spada, 98–99.

forty sisters. The statutes from the 1260 Franciscan General Chapter meeting at Narbonne cite a

group of thirteen friars as the minimum number for a house to be considered a *conventus,*

suggesting that already by 1239, Santa Chiara was a sizeable institution in the Franciscan

network.[129] The early donation by the Badoer family maintained the order's allegiance with the

aristocratic class that had been a part of Clarissan life since Clare's first community was

founded.[130] Among the sisters present for a 1273 chapter meeting when the convent laid claim to

the inheritance of a nobleman from Treviso were members of the Gritti, Bon, Gradenigo,

Trevisan, Falier, Molin, Corner, and Sanudo families. [131] These representatives of the patrician

class included a member of the Dandolo family, Suor Giovanna.[132]

The register of historical documents in the convent's archives compiled by Giovanni

Nicolosi in 1653 gives a sense of the institution's development.[133] The community's early

affiliation with Saint Clare's convent at San Damiano would have technically required an

adherence to its strict rule, which did not allow for any form of ownership. [134] As the thirteenth

century continued, however, there seems to have been no reservation about accepting bequests of

property and funds at Venice's Convent of Santa Chiara. The convent followed the Benedictine-

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[129] John Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order From Its Origins to the Year 1517,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 150.

[130] For an overview of the Poor Clares, see chapters two and eighteen in Moorman, 32–40 and 205–216; see also Jeryldene Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: the Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially the Introduction and first chapter, 1–33.

[131] Spada, "Origini del Monastero di S. Chiara," 100.

[132] Spada, 100.

[133] Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter abbreviated ASV), Corporazioni religiose soppresse (hereafter abbreviated CRS), Convento di Santa Chiara, Pergamene, 3.

[134] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 213, note 3. Technically, "Clarissan" designates only the houses that followed Clare's original rule for San Damiano. Second Order nuns following the more broadly disseminated rules of Cardinal Ugolino, Isabelle of France, and Pope Urban IV are "Minoresses," for the "Sorores Minores Inclusae" named in these documents.

style rule imposed by Urban IV in 1263, which placed it under the authority of the region's Franciscan provincial minister.[135] Being situated within this hierarchy, the convent of Santa Chiara benefitted from the support of Venice's ruling families.

Members of the Dandolo and Falier families begin to make bequests in the years that immediately followed the founding of the convent. In the second half of the thirteenth century, the community was under some degree of threat, as the register repeatedly makes note of papal protections. Six orders threaten excommunication on usurpers of the convent's holdings. A representative example is the order of 1239, "against those who disturb the holdings of the Monastery of Santa Maria Mater Domini," ["contro li molestanti di beni del Monasterio di Santa Maria Mater Domini"]. Another is the 1267 order "against those who possess or detain holdings belonging or promised to the venerable Monastery of Santa Maria Mater Domini" ["contro quelli che possedessero e detenessero beni attinenti et aspettanti al ven. Monasterio di Santa Maria Mater Domini"]. In 1260, the bishop of Castello was named as the mediator between the convent and its debtors.[136] Sixteen papal bulls recorded in the register grant the convent the privilege of full use of its properties, emphasizing that they can collect revenue from income producing agricultural operations ["sia tenuto pagato come de Posseduti Molini et altro."][137] Six of these papal privileges exempt the convent from paying taxes. All the entries concerning

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[135] ASV, CRS, Convento di Santa Chiara, Pergamene, 1.

[136] 1260, 5 March, "Bolla pontifica, con la qual vien dal sommo Pontefice delegato al Reverendissimo vescovo di Castello la Cognitione delle cose del Monasterio et contro li suoi debitori [Papal Bull, with which the highest Pontiff delegates to the most reverend bishop of Castello the knowledge (governance) of the affairs of the convent against its debtors]."

[137] 1248, 16 febbraio, "Privileggio Pontifico Concesso dalla santità Papa Alessando Quarto al Monasterio di Santa Chiara che quello sia tenuto a pagar come de posseduti Molini et altro et come in quello…"

privileges and excommunications, save one tax exemption from 1350, were recorded in the second half of the thirteenth century.

By the early fourteenth century, the convent was a powerful and wealthy institution. The register records numerous donations from Venice's elite families.[138] The convent collected rents from properties in Venice and Padua and it held agricultural operations on the mainland. These included holdings near Padua and Treviso at Campolongo, Noale, and Cendon as well as vineyards on the Lido near Malamocco. The Dandolo feature more frequently than any other family in the fourteenth century amongst the entries recording bequests. A member of the Dandolo family, Francesca, is named as abbess in 1341, 1342, 1347, and 1349.[139] In 1344, Nicoló Dandolo left fifty lire to a suor Agnessina resident in the convent. From 1278, under the terms of the Papal Bull *Exiit qui seminat,* friars were allowed to accept small gifts of funds with the approval of their institution's leadership.[140] Provincial statutes for the Veneto dating to 1290 define 100 *denari* as the maximum amount that a friar could receive.[141] The extent of the Dandolo family's dedication to the convent is demonstrated by the bequest of one of its members named Maria, who left all of her holdings to the convent at her death. The family's legacy continued to be commemorated later in the century, as attested by a bequest that allowed for perpetual funeral masses to be said in honor of the grandson of Andrea Dandolo, who bore the same name as the doge. This legacy of elite largesse lends context to the sumptuous appearance of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

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[138] ASV, CRS, Convento di Santa Chiara, Pergamene, 3. With the exception of note 34, information about the Convent of Santa Chiara in this paragraph is cited from Giovanni Nicolosi's 1653 register of historical documents.

[139] Silver, "Reframing Panel Paintings as Venetian Commodity," 73, n. 27.

[140] Bourdua, *Franciscans and Art Patronage,* 26.

[141] Bourdua, *Franciscans and Art Patronage,* 26; and A.G. Little, ed., *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 7 (1914): 447–465.

While the elaborate design of the Santa Chiara Polyptych and the wealth of the convent

for which it was commissioned would seem to be at odds with Saint Francis and Saint Clare's

ascetic values, it is important to note that the founders were not against the use of images. The

foundational miracle of the crucifix of San Damiano that spoke to Francis, commanding him to

rebuild his church, illustrates the Franciscan endorsement of the power and utility of images.[142]

A later account by Mariano di Firenze included in the *Annales Minorum* recounts Francis

painting images of "various creatures: angels, children, birds, trees and such" accompanied by

inscriptions in front of a church altar to "invite all creatures to praise the creator."[143] In a letter to

the custodians of the order's convents, Francis emphasized that everything pertaining to the

celebration of the Eucharist should be appropriately *pretiosa,* including chalices, corporals, and

altar furnishings.[144] Books of scripture are described in a similar way in Francis's letter to

clerics.[145]

Since the lifetime of Saint Francis, the order that he founded was riven with conflict over

how to interpret his call to poverty.[146] The dominant group known as the Conventuals advocated

for the order's development into a wealthy and secure organization, with a lifestyle similar to

traditional monastic orders. Despite occasional restrictions, such as those found in late thirteenth-

century General Chapter statutes, the Franciscans and their supporters commissioned a rich

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[142] Thomas of Celano, *The Second Life of Saint Francis,* in *St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies, English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis,* ed. Marion Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 347–611, 370–371 for the speaking crucifix episode. This legend enters the Franciscan literature with Thomas of Celano's *Second Life.*

[143] Quoted in Bourdua, *Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy,* 23..

[144] Quoted in Bourdua, 22. "Calices, corporalia, ornamenta, altaris et omnia, quae pertinent at sacrificum, pretiosa habere debeant [chalices, corporals, ornaments (images), altars, and everything that pertains to the Eucharist should be sufficiently precious]".

[145] Bourdua, 23.

[146] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 140–154. This chapter features an overview of the debate over poverty.

legacy of art and architecture.[147] Already in the years immediately following Francis's death, before his controversial tenure as Minister General, brother Elias presided over the building of the pilgrimage basilica at Assisi to enshrine the saint's remains.[148] Nicholas IV, the first Franciscan pope, commissioned extensive pictorial programs based on Franciscan themes at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and in the mother church in Assisi.[149] In the 1290s and the early decades of the fourteenth century the peninsula's leading painters were commissioned to continue the pictorial decoration of the interiors of the upper and lower church in Assisi.

The Santa Chiara Polyptych is in accord with this legacy. The date range proposed for the polyptych shortly follows Pope John XXII's aggressive resolution of the tensions over poverty with the *Cum inter nonulos bull,* which declared that Christ and the Apostles in fact owned the few possessions that they used in the service of their ministry.[150] As a result, the statutes that were imposed at the 1331 General Chapter meeting radically deemphasized the role of poverty in Franciscan life. In addition to this development in the wider Franciscan sphere, the Nicolosi register shows that the convent had long enjoyed the privilege of association with Venice's elite families.

In the Santa Chiara Polyptych, the goal of a mendicant calling is represented in sumptuous visual terms. The altarpiece's iconography exhorts its viewers to contemplate the details of Christ's Passion as inspiration for a life of sacrifice following the examples of Christ,

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[147] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 156. The statutes of the 1260 General Chapter meeting at Narbonne, for example, limited stone vaulting and the use of stained glass to the high altar chapel.

[148] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 85–8.

[149] See Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, *The Making of Assisi: The Pope, the Franciscans, and the Painting of the Basilica* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 21–33.

[150] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 321–28; see also Bourdua, *Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Itay,* 20.

the Virgin Mary, Clare, and Francis. Christ and the Virgin are clothed in costly silk garments. The entire ensemble is brought together in a gilded microarchitecture that resembles the contemporary production in goldwork and local architecture. The devotional goals of a cloistered community of women are shown in visual terms that a fourteenth-century Venetian could understand. The nuances of these visual terms will be examined in detail in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters. The remainder of this chapter will compare the altarpiece's format to other Franciscan objects, while the following chapter will examine the iconography in detail.

Many developments in religious practice over the course of the century that preceded Paolo Veneziano's artistic formation encouraged imagistic devotion. The confirmation of the doctrine of Transubstantiation in 1215 emphasized the physicality of Christ and the suffering he experienced in the Passion. The Franciscans were eager promoters of the adoration of the Eucharist and were even responsible for adding the ritualistic elevation of the Host to the Roman missal.[151] Francis himself was influenced by earlier Christian writers who emphasized the emotional experiences of Christ's humanity and suffering, such as Anselm and Bernard.[152] The founding saint's emphasis on affective emotional experience led to the growth of the extensive tradition of Franciscan devotional literature and image making.

An object known today as the Santa Chiara Triptych of Trieste is an ideal means to introduce the tradition of late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Franciscan devotional objects in the Veneto region (fig. 5). Like the Santa Chiara Polyptych in Venice's Accademia, the designation commonly used for the object in the scholarship refers to the Clarissan community for which it was commissioned. It is displayed today in Trieste's Museo Civico

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[151] Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18.
[152] Derbes, 18.

Sartorio. The triptych is a composite object with contributions from two generations of artists.[153] The central panel of the triptych was created shortly after 1300.[154] It features a dense profusion of images: the surface of the panel is filled with a grid of thirty-six scenes from the lives of the Virgin, Christ, Francis, and Clare. The panel is an example of a group of Venetian dossals that feature series of small narrative scenes with no central hieratic image.[155] Venetian narrative dossals are typical of the new image formats developed in response to late thirteenth-century Franciscan devotional culture.[156] At some point in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, the dossal was transformed into a triptych with the addition of wings. There is scholarly consensus that the wings are an early work by Paolo Veneziano.[157]

The thirty-six scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin that cover the surface of the Santa Chiara Triptych's central panel alternate between narrative and iconic representational modes. The minute rendering of landscapes, cityscapes, and crowds of spectators invites close viewing. At the same time, some moments in the narrative are notably schematic. The Veronica episode stands out in the sequence. The interaction is reduced to its defining feature, the

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[153] For the many questions attendant to this object, see Maria Walcher Casotti, *Istituto di Storia dell'Arte Antica e Moderna, Trieste,* v. 13, *Il Trittico di S. Chiara di Trieste e l'orientamento paleologo nell'arte di Paolo Veneziano* (Trieste: Università degli Studi di Trieste, 1961); Carla Travi, "Il Maestro del Trittico di Santa Chiara: Appunti per la pittura veneta di primo Trecento," *Arte Cristiana* 80 (1992): 81–96; and Francesca Flores d'Arcais, "Il Trittico di Santa Chiara e la pittura del Trecento a Trieste," in *Medioevo a Trieste: istituzioni, arte, società nel Trecento,* ed. Paolo Cammarosano et. al., 353–357 (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 2008).

[154] Travi, "Il Maestro del Trittico di Santa Chiara," 90–93.

[155] Edward Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence: Olschki, 1949), 145, Garrison classifies this group of works as "Horizontal Rectangular Dossals. Venetian Type."

[156] See Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy,* 17–18; and Holly Flora, *Cimabue and the Franciscans* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 201 for a summary of thirteenth-century developments that encouraged a focus on Christ's Passion through imagistic devotion. Flora uses the central panel of the Santa Chiara triptych of Trieste to introduce her discussion of narrative images created to encourage meditative reflection in Franciscan contexts.

[157] See Flores d'Arcais, "Il Trittico di Santa Chiara," 353–77.

miraculous image of Christ's face that appeared on Veronica's veil. It is almost as if an icon was

inserted into the series of narrative scenes. Paolo used similar strategies in the wings that he

created for the dossal. In the upper register of the right-hand wing, two discrete images are

juxtaposed in the same register: Christ as Man of Sorrows is shown next to the Madonna della

Misericordia adapted for a Clarissan audience.[158] The group gathered beneath the Virgin's cloak

consists only of Poor Clares. In the register below these two discrete images, a narrative scene

takes up the entire width of the panel. The pretext of this narrative scene is unclear. Maria

Walcher Casotti has argued that it commemorates the moment when an accord was reached

between the Clarissans and the bishop of Trieste.[159] Scanning the dense sequence of scenes that

alternate between different representational modes may have inspired reflection on the lives of

Christ and the Virgin. The visual repetition of familiar stories was a prompt for meditative

reflection. By adding the wings to the Trieste dossal, Paolo Veneziano interacted with a legacy

of Franciscan objects that emphasized sequential narrative. Such objects often merged the stories

of Francis and Clare with those of Christ and the Virgin. The dossal's final two scenes

emphasize its Franciscan provenance by showing the Death of Saint Clare and Saint Francis

Receiving the Stigmata (figs. 5, 17).

The Stigmata scene as it appears in the Santa Chiara triptych of Trieste is faithfully

replicated across three objects from Paolo Veneziano's orbit, including the Santa Chiara

Polyptych in the Accademia (fig. 18). The third example appears in a dossal in the Norton Simon

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[158] Hans Belting, *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion,* trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas, 1990), 36. Belting notes how the *Imago Pietatis* and the *Madonna della Misericordia* in the upper register are quotations of established image types that are able to function as independent images in the program of the triptych.
[159] See Walcher Casotti, *Il Trittico di S. Chiara di Trieste.*

Museum (fig. 19).[160] In all three representations Francis kneels in an opening in a schematic

image of Mount La Verna. He is silhouetted against a flat black background that represents the

darkness of the cave where he sheltered. In both the Norton Simon Dossal and Paolo

Veneziano's Santa Chiara Polyptych, the black background of the cave serves as a backdrop for

an identical inscription, verse 19 of the fifty-first Psalm: "Cor contritum et humiliatum Deus non

despicies" [a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise].[161] The inscription refers

to an episode from Franciscan literature. In setting the scene for the *First Life,* Thomas of Celano

describes Francis using the medieval divination practice of opening the Bible at random to

discern meaning in whatever verses are revealed: "Then rising from his prayer, in a spirit of

humility and with a contrite heart and signing himself with the sign of the holy cross, he took the

book from the altar and opened it with reverence and fear."[162] According to Thomas of Celano,

whose language recalls that of the Psalms, this is the moment when Francis "understood that it

was for him to enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations, many trials, and many

struggles."[163] The repetition of the same scene across three objects, two of which bear identical

inscriptions, demonstrate that Paolo Veneziano was well-versed in the specific sorts of

devotional images that his predecessors and contemporaries created for Franciscan patrons.

Devotion to the Passion was also central for the Clarissans. In his *Legend of Saint Clare,*

Thomas of Celano notes that Clare "learned the Office of the Cross as Francis, a lover of the

Cross, had established it and recited it with similar affection."[164] The tradition of emotionally

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[160] Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting,* no. 386.
[161] See Julian Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 19–20.
[162] Thomas of Celano, "First Life," in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies,* 306–7.
[163] Thomas of Celano, "First Life," 308.
[164] Thomas of Celano, "The Legend of Saint Clare," in *The Lady – Clare of Assisi: Early Documents,* ed. Regis J. Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2006), 307.

effective literature continued to flourish in the period when the Santa Chiara Polyptych was produced. It is best exemplified by a work known as the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (hereafter *Meditations*)*,* written by an unknown Franciscan author for a Clarissan audience between 1336 and 1346.[165] The author of the *Meditations* exhorted his readers to visualize narrative moments from the gospels, even encouraging them to imagine details that are not included in the scriptural accounts. This imaginative practice is presented as a beneficial spiritual activity that encourages identification with Christ and the Virgin. The reflective practice promoted by texts such as Franciscan biographies and the *Meditations* inspired the creation of devotional objects with series of narrative scenes.

The altarpieces that have been discussed so far in this chapter, including the Santa Chiara Triptych of Trieste, are large-scale objects intended to facilitate corporate devotion in an institutional setting. The central panel of the Santa Chiara triptych features the stories that were the bedrock of Christian narrative and Franciscan devotional literature. Together with other objects, such as the Norton Simon dossal, they represent the legacy of Franciscan art available to Paolo Veneziano as he designed the Santa Chiara Polyptych. Other types of objects associated with Paolo Veneziano, namely small-scale triptychs, were created to facilitate devotion in the private sphere. This object tradition testifies to a translation of forms across media and scale. Like the Santa Chiara Polyptych, and its precedent in the Santa Chiara Triptych of Trieste, two small-scale triptychs by Paolo Veneziano and a series of ivory carvings involve a multiplicity of images that alternate between the narrative and the iconic. Small-scale triptychs gave Paolo and

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[165] Holly Flora, *The Devout Belief of the Imagination: The Paris Meditationes Vitae Christi and Female Franciscan Spirituality in Trecento Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 30; see also Isa Ragusa and Rosalie Green, eds., *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

his workshop collaborators the opportunity to meet patrons' demand with images that could be repeated and easily varied according to specific requests.

The objects at the center of this discussion are two triptychs in tempera on panel. One, in Parma's Galleria Nazionale, survives intact; it measures twenty-eight and a half inches across (fig. 6). [166] Another example was dispersed during the nineteenth century. Today its fragments are divided among the National Gallery of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Worcester Art Museum (figs. 3, 20, 21). The fragments will be collectively referred to as the Worcester triptych in the following pages. Both triptychs are generally dated to the 1340s in the scholarship on stylistic grounds. [167] A panel of the Virgin and Child in Avignon's Musée du Petit Palais was once thought to be the central panel of the Worcester triptych (fig. 22). [168] A reconsideration of its measurements in a recent technical study indicates that it is too large to have fit with this reconstruction. [169] It is therefore likely to have been part of a third triptych with a similar format. Finally, two wings recently sold at Sotheby's are smaller in scale, an example of yet another variation of the type. [170]

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[166] For catalog entries, see Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 118; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* cat. no. 5; and Flores d'Arcais, ed., *Il Trecento adriatico,* 148–9, cat. no. 23.

[167] See Laura Llewellyn, "Paolo Veneziano's Triptychs for Personal Devotion," in *Paolo Veneziano: Art and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century Venice,* by Laura Llewellyn and John Witty, 25-47 (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2021) [hereafter abbreviated as Llewellyn and Witty].

[168] Michel Laclotte and Élisabeth Mognetti, *Avignon, Musée du Petit Palais: Peinture italienne* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux), cat. no. 202.

[169] Catherine Schmidt Patterson, Joanna Dunn, Rita Piccione Albertson, et. al., "Paolo Veneziano Under the Microscope: New Technical Information Regarding the Worcester Triptych," in Llewellyn and Witty 2021, 75–91.

[170] "Paolo Veneziano, Wings of a Triptych," Master Paintings Evening Sale, 30 January 2019, https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/master-paintings-evening-n10007/lot.11.html, accessed May 2021.

A general description of the Parma triptych provides an overview of the object type. The central panel of the Parma triptych is divided into two compartments (fig. 6). The upper compartment features the Crucifixion; the lower compartment contains a half-length Virgin and Child. Seven saints are shown in the wings of the triptychs. Each register features a pair of saints, with the exception of the ascendant Magdalene – the only figure in the triptych to take up the entire width of the panel. Saint Francis appears at the Virgin's right hand, together with Saint George in the bottom register of the left wing. The upper register features saints Michael and John the Baptist. On the opposite side of the triptych, saints Ursula and Anthony Abbot occupy the lower register. The only variation in the iconography of the two triptychs is in the selection of the Virgin martyr saint in the lower register. Ursula was chosen for the Parma triptych, while Barbara appears in the Worcester example. The Annunciation is divided into two vignettes that occupy the triangular compartments at the top of the wings. The archangel Gabriel kneels and makes the sign of blessing in the left wing. On the right, the Virgin sits on a stone throne next to a well and a basin containing greenery. On the exterior of the shutters, Saints Christopher and Blaise appear with gold haloes against a plain red background.

The same pair of saints was chosen for the exterior of both the Parma and Worcester triptychs. Saint Christopher was especially popular for this location, as he appears there in both the Parma and Worcester triptychs, as well as on the Santa Chiara Triptych of Trieste.[171] The painting style on the exterior of the shutters is more simplistic than what is seen on the interior. The shift in quality of execution and materials implies a hierarchy, or sense of progression from exterior to interior. The plain red background and simple rendering give way to elaborate detail and costly materials including gold leaf and ultramarine paint. The hierarchical progression

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[171] Saint Christopher appears in the same position also on the left wing sold at Sotheby's.

between two modes of representation has recently been related to the Venetian tradition of foldable altarpieces that could be opened to display relics.[172] The Parma and Worcester triptych feature a format that was clearly popular with Paolo Veneziano's patrons.

If completely reassembled, the Worcester triptych would be slightly larger than the Parma version, at about thirty and a half inches across.[173] The two triptychs were likely produced contemporaneously in Paolo's workshop, with the contributions of more than one hand. Minor refinements, such as the addition of two trees to the landscape beneath the Magdalene, and the placement of an orb in the hand of Saint Michael, support the hypothesis that the Parma triptych was authored first.[174] The Parma triptych established the object type, and improvements were made in the Worcester version.

Mary Magdalene is the most striking aspect of the Parma and Worcester triptychs' iconography. In both examples, her image takes up the entire width of the right-hand wing's upper register. The Magdalene faces the viewer and raises both of her hands in front of her. She is clothed with the long tresses of her own hair. She floats above the ground, carried heavenwards by two angels. The face of Christ appears between the Magdalene's raised hands. *The Golden Legend* narrates that in the years of her penance in the desert, the Magdalene was carried to heaven by angels at each of the seven canonical hours. There she was fed the Eucharist, which was her only subsistence. The representation of the Magdalene in the triptych favors the western tradition, which conflated Mary Magdalene with the anonymous sinner who

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[172] See Cristina Guarnieri, "The Stories of St. Lucy by Jacobello del Fiore and Venetian Folding Reliquary Altarpieces," *Musica & Figura* 5 (2018): 41–56, 249–57; Guarnieri, "Lo svelamento rituale delle reliquie e le pale ribaltabili di Paolo Veneziano;" and Llewellyn, "Paolo Veneziano's Triptychs for Personal Devotion," 34–9.
[173] Laura Llewellyn, "The Worcester Triptych," in Witty and Llewellyn, 107.
[174] Llewellyn, "The Worcester Triptych," 107–8.

washed Christ's feet with her tears.[175] Illustrating the Magdalene as a penitent sinner clothed

with her own hair became especially prominent in Italy in the mid to late thirteenth century.[176]

Paolo appears to have assembled his own iconography to represent the ascendent

Magdalene from difference sources. While the image of Christ's face enclosed in a halo

represents the Eucharist, the iconography recalls the Byzantine tradition of the Madonna

Platytera,[177] in which the Virgin's hands are raised in an *orans* gesture and a half-length image

of the Christ Child is shown within a medallion in front of her chest.[178] The dual representations

of this saint in the triptychs – as an impassioned observer of Christ's suffering at the Crucifixion,

and as a penitent hermit whose ascetic devotion brought her closer to god – are an evocation of

Franciscan ideals.[179] The Magdalene is given a similar prominence in the Santa Chiara Polyptych

with her appearance at the Resurrection. The emphasis on the Magdalene and the presence of

Francis in both the Parma and Worcester triptychs suggest the possibility of a Franciscan patron,

or at least an individual who was especially devoted to Franciscan ideals.[180]

Assuming that it came from a similar triptych, a comparison between the Avignon half-

length Virgin and Child and the lower register of the Parma triptych demonstrates how Paolo

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[175] Vassiliki Foskolou, "Mary Magdalene between East and West: Cult and Image, Relics and Politics in the Late Thirteenth-Century Eastern Mediterranean," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 65/66 (2011–2012): 271.

[176] Foskolou, "Magdalene between East and West," 273.

[177] Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento,* 29 (uses the term for the Accademia Virgin and Child with donors).

[178] Nancy Patterson Sevcenko, "Virgin Platytera," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). The iconographic type of the Virgin making the orans gesture with a circumscribed image of Christ at her chest is generally associated with the icon type traced to the Blachernai monastery of Constantinople. The Nikopoios is another closely related icon tradition.

[179] Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, "Emotion, Beauty and Franciscan Piety: A New Reading of the Magdalene Chapel in the Lower Church of Assisi," *Studi Medievali* 26 (1985): 699–710.

[180] Llewellyn, "Paolo Veneziano's Triptychs for Personal Devotion," 40.

Veneziano and his workshop collaborators were able to use the triptych's format as a structure

within which they could experiment with subtle variations. While the format of the half-length

Virgin and Child is similar, the interaction between the figures has a different mood. Paolo

emphasized a close interaction between the Virgin and Child in the Parma triptych. In the

Avignon panel, the Christ child looks out to the viewer and clutches a green parrot in his left

hand as he grips the back of his mother's neck with his right. Infrared imaging reveals the

presence of a pentimento that indicates that his arm was originally shown in front of the Virgin's

neck, as in the Parma version.[181] The structure of the triptych establishes a pattern: narrative

images of the Crucifixion and Annunciation are juxtaposed with more iconic images of the

Virgin and full-length saints in the wings. Paolo and his workshop assistants freely used this

basic pattern repeatedly and manipulated it freely to emphasize different saints or portray

relationships in different ways according to the wishes of a given patron.

The practice of creating variations on an established theme in the Parma and Worcester

triptychs and the Avignon panel was also taken up by artists working in other media. The Parma

and Worcester triptychs were luxury objects made with the costly materials of gold and

ultramarine paint. They were apparently well known enough to inspire emulation by Venice's

ivory carvers. A series of three ivory triptychs attest to the popularity of Paolo's object designs.

In the catalogs of the museum collections that contain these objects, they are dated ca. 1360–

70.[182] The iconography of Paolo Veneziano's paintings, and also the ornamentation of his

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[181] Llewellyn, "The Worcester Triptych," 108.

[182] See Paul Williamson and Glyn Davies, *Medieval Ivory Carvings, 1200–1550,* vol. 1 (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014), cat. no. 64, where the Walters and Wernher Collection triptychs are also mentioned; for a broader discussion of Venetian ivory carving, see Michele Tomasi, "Contributi allo studio della scultura eburnea trecentesca in Italia: Venezia," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* 4, 1 (1999): 221-246.

altarpieces, were replicated on a small scale. Three triptychs in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Walters Art Museum, and the Wernher Collection at Ranger's House, London replicate the basic format of the Parma and Worcester triptychs (figs. 23–25). The central image of the Victoria and Albert triptych is an elaborately detailed Coronation of the Virgin. The Walters triptych is focused on the Passion narrative. The Crucifixion scene at the apex of the triptych establishes a sequence that continues with the Deposition and Entombment in the two compartments below. The Wernher triptych only has one narrative compartment in the center, featuring the Deposition.

Each of these ivories involves a varying degree of quality. The Victoria and Albert triptych is the most detailed and refined. The Walters Ivory approaches the Victoria and Albert triptych's level of detail, but the carving is markedly simplified, especially in the figures. The Wernher triptych has the least refined execution of the three examples.

Despite the variation in quality, the format is constant across all three of the ivories. The wings repeat the iconography of the Parma and Worcester triptychs: two registers of full-length saints divided by simple borders, with the Annunciation divided across the pinnacles of the wings. The iconography of the wings of the Victoria and Albert and Walters ivories is identical. The upper registers show John the Baptist opposite John the Evangelist, with the warrior saints Michael and George below. John the Baptist and Michael are especially close to Paolo's painted representations (fig. 26). The Wernher triptych's iconography is focused on women saints, including Mary Magdalene, Catherine of Alexandria, Margaret of Antioch, and an unidentified virgin martyr saint. Its humble quality is a testament to the popularity of Paolo's art outside of elite contexts. Surely limited survivals, the painted triptychs and their small-scale ivory counterparts discussed in this section offer a glimpse of the breadth of Paolo's influence on

contemporary material culture. In the ivories, there is no longer a clear Franciscan affiliation, but rather a general exhortation to contemplate important narrative scenes and chosen saints that would have been encouraged in all mendicant contexts. As there is a varying degree of quality across the three triptychs, there is also a diminution in scale. At just over five inches tall, the Wernher Collection triptych could easily be carried as a personal devotional image. Working for a broader audience, the carvers of Venice's ivory workshops applied their own variations to the themes established by Paolo Veneziano.

Taken together, the objects discussed in this chapter do not support the simple Byzantine versus Western dichotomy that has been used to present the Santa Chiara Polyptych in the previous scholarship. They suggest that the Franciscan tradition in and around Venice inspired a taste for a new range of image formats.[183] When Paolo Veneziano became involved in the project of turning the Santa Chiara Triptych into a dossal with the addition of wings, his workshop had the opportunity to engage with a regional tradition of objects created to facilitate meditative reflection on important Franciscan narratives. Venetian narrative dossals are an object type that exist apart from the dichotomy of the Byzantine Vita icon and the Gothic polyptych that Muraro and Pedrocco relied on. With its combination of narrative and iconic images, the Santa Chiara Triptych of Trieste shows the range and flexibility of late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century artists. It affirms intentionality for an object such as the Santa Chiara Polyptych, which has previously been seen as an unresolved conflation of two traditions. In designing objects like the Santa Chiara Polyptych and the Saint Lucy Polyptych of Krk, Paolo Veneziano was able to draw on traditions such as Venetian narrative dossals.

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[183] See Derbes, *Picturing the Passion,* 1–11; and Flora, *Cimabue and the Franciscans,* 207–16.

The new formats developed in his workshop featured series of narrative scenes to inspire reflection on important stories from the Bible and the Order's own history. The series of narrative scenes were juxtaposed with hieratic or iconic images of saints. Architectural frames united the varied approaches to representation in a coherent structure. The formats that Paolo Veneziano developed were ripe with potential for variation to create still more images in response to the mendicant culture of imagistic devotion. The Santa Chiara Polyptych and its complex design emerge from the themes and variations that Paolo Veneziano developed in response to the previous decades' devotional images, including the central panel of the Santa Chiara Triptych. The dichotomies of the Byzantine vita icon and the Gothic polyptych are insufficient to account for Paolo's design of an engaging devotional image for a Clarissan community in fourteenth-century Venice. The body of material discussed here, including the Santa Chiara Triptych and the triptychs for private devotion, renders a fuller account of the complex culture of imagistic devotion in which Paolo participated. Rather than an unresolved conflation of two disparate traditions, the Santa Chiara Polyptych is a visual solution that presents a series of complex iconographies for the community's contemplation. The details of this iconography will be discussed in the following chapter.

2. Iconographies for the Convent's Audiences

In an essay published in 2014, Julian Gardner treated the Santa Chiara Polyptych's iconography more directly than any of his predecessors in the scholarship had done.[184] Gardner's focus is how the iconography relates to the history of the Franciscan Order, specifically the image precedents of the fresco cycle in the Upper Church of the Basilica of San Francesco at Assisi. He notes that the scenes of Francis Renouncing His Father and the Death of Saint Francis are especially close to the Assisi frescoes.[185] Concerning the altarpiece's principal subject, the Coronation of the Virgin (fig. 27), Gardner only goes so far as to connect it to the convent's first dedication as S. Maria Madre di Gesù Cristo.[186] Gardner concludes his essay by noting that more work needs to be done on the interconnections between the polyptych's iconography and its association with the convent of Santa Chiara.

The relationship between the Santa Chiara Polyptych's iconography and its Clarissan provenance goes deeper than the superficial correspondence between the scene of Francis's Renunciation and the fresco at Assisi. The details of the Christological scenes on the sides of the altarpiece are in accord with longstanding traditions of Franciscan devotional literature for their emphasis on emotional experience and their clear preference for the Gospel of John over the synoptic gospel accounts. The Christological scenes and the upper register's Franciscan sequence culminate in the central panel. The Coronation of the Virgin represents the poetic tradition of

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[184] Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 16–24. On page 19, Gardner notes that he favors the date range proposed by Evelyn Sandberg Vavalà and Roberto Longhi, namely the end of Paolo's career in the 1350s.

[185] Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 19.

[186] Gardner, 20. Other details that Gardner mentions include the inscription in the Stigmata scene, the Death of Saint Francis, and the detail of a sword driven into the Virgin's breast in the Crucifixion scene.

Bridegroom imagery adapted from the Song of Songs. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) and

others interpreted this example of ancient Hebrew love poetry as an analogy for the devout soul's

yearning for God.[187] For medieval interpreters the bride in the Old Testament poem

simultaneously represented the Virgin and the universal church.[188] With the groom representing

Christ, the poem analogizes Christian devotional experience on many levels. In feminine

monastic contexts, the Virgin is an ideal role model for a professed member of a religious order.

Saint Clare's own writings, particularly her letters to Agnes of Prague, demonstrate her fondness

for mystical bridegroom imagery as a means to understand her vocation.[189] The *Meditations on

the Life of Christ,* which were written by a Franciscan friar for a Clarissan audience during Paolo

Veneziano's lifetime, frequently quote Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs.

The *Meditations* are an example of the type of devotional literature that emphasized

emotional experience. The text encouraged readers to imagine details in familiar Biblical

narratives to develop a closer identification with Christ and the Virgin.[190] Reading the Santa

Chiara Polyptych's iconography against the *Meditations* brings a sense of resolution to the

altarpiece's complex arrangement and varied narrative threads. Where the objects discussed in

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[187] Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); see especially chapter five, 123–50 for the text's popularity as an analogy of the soul's love for God in the context of twelfth-century monastic reform.

[188] Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "Cimabue at Assisi: The Virgin, the 'Song of Songs,' and the Gift of Love," in *Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy,* ed. William Cook, 95–112 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 95.

[189] Ilia Delio, "Clare of Assisi and the Mysticism of Motherhood," in *Franciscans at Prayer,* ed. Timothy Johnson, 31–62 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); see also *The Lady – Clare of Assisi: Early Documents,* ed. Regis Armstrong, 39–54 (New York: New City Press, 2006), 39–54 for the four letters to Agnes of Prague.

[190] Holly Flora, "Fashioning the Passion: The Poor Clares and the Clothing of Christ," *Art History* 40, 3 (2017): 464–495. Flora's explication of details from the *Meditations* such as Christ's loin cloth demonstrate how Clarissan audiences could have used the text to deepen their reflection on images of Biblical narratives.

the first chapter offer precedents for complex object designs featuring series of images, the *Meditations* present a model for how historical viewers were likely to have perceived the images themselves.

The author of the *Meditations* addresses the character of life in a Clarissan community. While he draws on the defining features of the Franciscan tradition that emphasized evangelizing and charitable works beyond the convent walls, activities that comprise the *vita activa,* he notes that it is appropriate for Clarissans to focus their attention on meditation. Under strict claustration, their primary discipline was the *vita contemplativa.*[191] The *Meditations* were widely popular. Two hundred manuscript versions are known, including translations in German, English, French, and Latin, dating from the mid-fourteenth to the fifteenth century.[192] As the text involves quotations from the visionary Elizabeth of Töss, who died in 1336, recent consensus dates the writing of the *Meditations* to the years around 1340.[193] Two versions of the text are known from the manuscript tradition.[194] The extensive quotations from Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs are found in the longer version. The majority of the chapters are imaginative retellings of the principal events of the New Testament. Holly Flora notes that the moralizing passages and quotations from Bernard of Clairvaux in the longer version emphasize its purpose as an instructional text for guiding the devotional practices of a Clarissan audience.[195] The quotations from Bernard culminate in a rumination on the devout soul's union with God.

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[191] Flora, *The Devout Belief of the Imagination,* see chapter one, "'You Must Begin from This': The Meditationes Vitae Christi, the History of Art, and the Study of Female Spirituality" for a discussion of the authorship, dating, and dissemination of the manuscript tradition, 27–47.

[192] Flora, *Devout Belief of the Imagination,* 32.

[193] Flora, 30.

[194] Flora, 32.

[195] Flora, 33.

Above all others, this aspect of the *Meditations* supports a detailed analysis of the Santa Chiara

Polyptych's images and interrelated narrative threads.

While textual traditions such as the *Meditations* offer new approaches to the Santa Chiara

Polyptych, it must be noted that many of its representations conform with the standard pictorial

conventions of fourteenth-century Italian art. This is especially the case for the scenes of the

Nativity and Baptism that begin the Christological sequence (figs. 28, 29). The closest

antecedents for the Nativity scene are the Norton Simon dossal and the Santa Chiara Triptych of

Trieste. The general conception of the scene is in harmony with the Byzantine tradition. The

stable is a cave cleft into a schematic mountainside and the manger is a stone trough. Various

episodes from the gospel narrative, including the Visitation of the Shepherds and the Adoration

of the Magi are combined in the single scene. Paolo makes use of this common practice

throughout the polyptych.

The text of the *Meditations* includes a detail that describes how a fourteenth-century

Clarissan viewer might have related to this kind of conventional representation. The author

attributes agency to the familiar figures of the ox and the donkey: "The ox and the ass knelt with

their mouths above the manger and breathed on the Infant as though they possessed reason and

knew that the Child was so poorly wrapped that He needed to be warmed, in that cold season."[196]

While the Nativity would be a natural place to start any narration of Christ's life, it is worth

noting that the subject has a special importance for the Franciscans. As recounted by

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[196] *Meditations,* 33–4. For an example of the pictorial traditions that Paolo Veneziano perpetuated, see Yu A. Kozlova, "Icon with the Nativity," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power,* ed. Helen Evans, 180–81 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), exh. cat., cat. nos. 100, 101. See also Flora, "Fashioning the Passion," 476. Flora notes the tradition that the ox and the ass refer to the prefiguration of the Jews' rejection of Christ interpreted in Isaiah 1:3, "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel has not known me, and my people have not understood."

Bonaventure in the Legenda Maior, Francis was known for his promotion of the feast of the

Nativity.[197] Bonaventure's official biography relates how Francis obtained permission from the

Pope to stage a Nativity display at Greccio to arouse devotion in the populace. A local knight's

miraculous vision of Francis picking up a living child from the manger entered Franciscan

legend as one of the saint's miracles represented in the fresco cycles of the Upper Church.[198]

Like the Nativity, the Baptism in the following scene follows Byzantine precedents that were

also repeated by Paolo's predecessors in the Norton Simon dossal and the Santa Chiara Triptych

of Trieste.

      With the Nativity and Baptism initiating the sequence, the stage has been set for the story

of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. The representation of the Last Supper is the first instance in

the sequence that shows a preference for the Gospel of John. In both the first and second version

of his biography, Thomas of Celano notes that Francis requested the Gospel of John be read

aloud at his death.[199] The preference for John's account is maintained throughout the altarpiece.

The scene takes place before an architectural setting that creates a sense of spatial depth and

emphasizes the central figure of Christ (fig. 30). The apostles are seated on a wooden bench

around a large rectangular table. Their distress at Christ's announcement of his betrayal is

palpable in their vivid facial expressions. Such emotional details appear to respond to the tenor

of John's gospel, which emphasizes the tender relationship between Christ and the Apostle

John.[200] The *Meditations* expound on the relationship between Christ and John, describing how

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[197] Bonaventure, "Legenda Maior," in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies,* 710-711.

[198] See Beth Mulvaney, "Standing on the Threshold: Beholder and Vision in the Assisi Crib at Greccio," in *Finding Saint Francis in Literature and Art,* ed. Cynthia Ho et. al., 23–34 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[199] Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies,* 323, 536.

[200] John 13:26.

he lowered his head in dejection over the news of the betrayal.[201] In Paolo's painting, John is

depicted accordingly, leaning his head on Christ's breast. In other details the scene appears to be

keyed specifically to the *Meditations*. Rather than the bread and wine of the gospel text, Paolo's

painting shows an animal carcass in the dish in the center of the table, thus representing the

"paschal lamb" mentioned in the *Meditations*.[202]

  Judas's betrayal of Christ is the focal point of the following scene (fig. 31). As in the

Nativity that begins the narrative sequence, three episodes are combined in a single scene. Christ

kneels in agony on a promontory in the background while the apostles sleep below him.[203] In the

foreground, Judas betrays Christ to the soldiers and temple guards with a kiss. There is a

precedent in Franciscan literature for the combination of the three narrative moments of the

Agony in the Garden, Betrayal, and Arrest. In Bonaventure's *Lignum Vitae*, written just before

the turn of the fourteenth century, the first section of the second book ("On the Passion of

Christ") is devoted to the three episodes combined in the Santa Chiara Polyptych.[204] The three

episodes combined in Paolo's painting had the potential to instruct the polyptych's viewers about

Christ's dual nature as human and divine.[205] Christ is at his most human in the background as he

prays at Gethsemane.[206] He demonstrates his divinity in the foreground with his calm acceptance

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[201] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 312.
[202] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 311; Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20.
[203] Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42.
[204] Bonaventure, "The Tree of Life," in *The Works of Bonaventure,* ed. José de Vinck, 95–145 (Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 2016), 118.
[205] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion,* 67.
[206] Describing Christ's Agony in the Garden, the author of the *Meditations* writes that "He appears to have forgotten that He is God and prays like a man," 321.

of the arrest and the mercy shown to the servant Malchus by his admonition against Peter's violence. [207]

In the following scene, on the opposite side of the central Coronation panel, Jesus is shown ensconced in a crowd of menacing soldiers on the Road to Calvary (fig. 32). In the gospel texts, this episode is described with only one or two verses. In contrast to the synoptic gospels, which all mention Simon of Cyrene carrying Christ's cross, John narrates that Christ carried his cross himself.[208] Once again, the emphasis on John's account can be traced to Franciscan devotional literature, specifically Bonaventure. Favoring John's account, which omits Simon of Cyrene, was an opportunity to underscore Christ's physical suffering.[209] It also resonates with Christ's exhortation in Matthew 16:24 that any man who wishes to be a disciple must "deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." These words, uttered as a rebuke to Peter's hope that Jesus might escape the Crucifixion, were quoted by Francis in the introductory language to the founding Rule of 1221.[210] Christ is represented carrying the cross in the fresco cycles of the upper and lower church in San Francesco, Assisi, and in numerous thirteenth-century panels for Franciscan houses.[211]

In Paolo's painting particular aspects of the scene are picked out. Among the crowd of armor-clad soldiers, two men wearing brightly colored tunics perform the work of executioners. One of them walks behind Christ, reaching back to shove the Virgin away as she attempts to

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[207] John 18:11. In the Gospel of Matthew 26:52, Christ reproaches the unnamed apostle, "all who take the sword will perish with the sword;" in Luke 22:51, Christ heals the servant's ear after he stops the attack; the synoptic gospels refer only to a group of armed men, John 18:1–12 specifies that they are soldiers and temple guards.

[208] Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21-22; Luke 23:26; John 19:16-17.

[209] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion,* 129, notes 48, 49.

[210] Saint Francis, "Rule of 1221," 31.

[211] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion,* 130–131.

speak to Christ. This gesture resonates with one of the many embellishments to the scriptures

narrated in the *Meditations*. The author describes how the Virgin and John the Evangelist caught

up with Christ by taking a shorter road towards Calvary:

> When, however, outside the gate of the city, at a crossroads, she encountered Him, for the
> First time seeing Him burdened by such a large cross, she was half dead of anguish and
> could not say a word to Him; nor could He speak to her, He was so hurried along by
> those who led Him to be crucified.[212]

Executioners and soldiers who push the Virgin away as she approaches Christ heighten the

scene's emotional appeal in a manner that is consistent with the text of the *Meditations.*

Precedents for emphasizing the gesture can be found in Passion cycles created for Franciscan

contexts. A prominent example is Pietro Lorenzetti's fresco of the Road to Calvary painted circa

1316 for the Lower Church in Assisi.[213] As Christ carries his cross, the soldier standing behind

him violently places his hands on the Virgin to prevent her approach.

The Passion cycle of the Santa Chiara Polyptych concludes in the following scene with

the Crucifixion (fig. 33). To discern the details recorded in the four gospels and place them in

their proper order, the viewer must look closely. The scene represents the moment of Christ's

death. Above the soldiers who cast lots for Christ's clothing, [214] the believing centurion Longinus

points to Christ.[215] The emphatic gesture of his right hand focuses the viewer's gaze on Jesus's

dead body, aligning the representation with John's account, which emphasizes the fulfillment of

Old Testament prophecy.[216] Following the description of Christ's death, the gospels mention the

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[212] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 332. Anne Derbes cites a similar interaction in the

[213] Derbes, *Picturing the Passion,* 119.

[214] Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:23.

[215] Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47; John 19:35.

[216] John 19:31-35. The gospel recounts that the Jews asked that the remaining thieves' legs be
broken to hasten their demise. This fulfills the Old Testament prophecy from Psalm 34:20 that
Christ's bones would not be broken, as well as Zechariah 12:10, "they shall look on me, whom
they have pierced."

women disciples who watched the Crucifixion.[217] Only the Gospel of John specifies that Jesus's

mother was present.[218] His gospel emphasizes the emotional encounter when Christ speaks to the

Virgin and his beloved disciple John, commanding them both to care for each other in his

impending absence.[219]

Paolo chose to illustrate the intensity of the Virgin's sorrow with a sword driven into her

breast.[220] This iconographic detail connects an important scriptural reference to the imagery

favored in contemporary Franciscan devotional literature. The scriptural reference in question is

Luke's account of Christ's early life, which relates that when the Virgin took the infant Christ to

the temple to commemorate his birth with the appropriate sacrifice, the elderly prophet Simeon

predicts her future sorrow, "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts,

thoughts may be revealed."[221] The most famous use of the image in literature is in the *Stabat

Mater* hymn, generally attributed to the Franciscan poet Jacopone of Todi (1230–1306).[222] The

poem's eleven stanzas detail the sufferings of the Virgin at the foot of the cross, and the speaker

requests that he can come to know the depths of these sufferings and share in them.[223] The first

stanza concludes by describing the Virgin, "Contrite and sorrowful / Pierced with a Sword

[Contristantem et dolentem / Pertransivit gladius]."[224] Like Thomas of Celano when he described

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[217] Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49; John 19:25.
[218] Matthew, Mark, and John name the women, with some degree of variation on the part of each author. All three of them name the Magdalene; Luke refers to them only as "the women who followed from Galilee."
[219] John 19:26-27.
[220] Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 2004, 20 is the first to call attention to this detail in the art historical literature.
[221] Luke 2:35.
[222] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 265–66, 269.
[223] K.P. Harrington, ed., *Medieval Latin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 362–365.
[224] Harrington., ed., *Medieval Latin,* 363.

Francis's response to the discernment of his calling, Jacopone of Todi used the language of the fifty-first Psalm (a contrite heart) to describe the Virgin's acceptance of her son's fate.

The image of a piercing sword as an illustration of sorrow is used repeatedly in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ.* When Christ rebukes the disciples who chastised the Magdalen for wasting the valuable unguent that she poured over Christ's feet, the author quotes Matthew 26:12, referring to the moment when Jesus says that her anointing was to prepare him for burial. In one of his typical imaginative glosses, the author asks, "Do you not think that the knife of these words pierced the soul of the mother?"[225] At the Last Supper, Christ's announcement that one of the Apostles will betray him "entered their heart like a sharp knife."[226] When Jesus indicates to John the identity of the traitor, John is "deeply stunned and stabbed to the heart" as he rests his head on Christ's breast.[227] The author of the *Meditations* brings the image back to its origins with his conclusion of the Passion narrative as he describes the Virgin looking at Christ's wounds.

> Do you see how often she is near death today: certainly as often as she saw new things done against her Son. In truth there was fulfilled in her what Simeon had said to her. […] For now, truly, the sword of that lance pierced the body of the Son and the soul of the mother.[228]

The image's popularity persisted from its use by Jacopone of Todi into Paolo Veneziano's lifetime, as indicated by its frequent use in the *Meditations.* Paolo's appeal, in the scene of the Crucifixion, to the poetic imagery that Franciscan writers adapted to deepen the reader's emotional response is a clear instance of the artist tailoring his imagery for a Franciscan audience.

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[225] *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 305.
[226] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 312.
[227] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 312.
[228] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 340.

The remaining two scenes of the Christological sequence in the Santa Chiara Polyptych, the Noli Me Tangere episode and the Ascension, celebrate Christ's resurrection. (figs. 34, 35). In the first of these scenes the Magdalene is especially prominent.[229] On the left-hand side of the scene, Christ emerges from a stone sarcophagus. The tomb is represented as a rough-hewn opening in a schematic mountainside. The Magdalene kneels immediately in front of the tomb behind her and extends her hands towards a second image of the resurrected Christ who stands before her. He gestures towards her, admonishing that he cannot be touched, as he has not yet ascended to the father.

The Noli Me Tangere episode is only recorded in the Gospel of John.[230] His account suggests a special degree of affection between Christ and the Magdalene. After Peter and another disciple inspect the empty tomb, she experiences a vision of angels seated on Christ's funeral slab. Then, she is the first to see the resurrected Christ. Having mistaken Christ for a gardener, she recognizes him when he speaks her name. Following the command not to touch him, Christ also instructs the Magdalene to tell the other disciples what she has seen. The bond between Christ and the Magdalene suggested in John's account was a natural focal point for rumination in the *Meditations.* The author is vivid in his speculation about how the experience must have affected her.

> Then the Magdalene, as if changed, though just as unwilling ever to part from Him, says, "Lord, as I see, your relationship with us will not be as it used to be. I beg you not to forget me. Remember, Lord, the good things that you gave me, and the intimacy and love that you granted me, and remember me, O Lord my God."[231]

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[229] The Magdalene first appears in the altarpiece in the Road to Calvary and in the Crucifixion. She can be identified as the figure in the red cloak just behind the Virgin in both of these scenes.
[230] John 20:1–18.
[231] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 363.

These words cast the Magdalene as a model of devotional practice that would have been recognizable to the audience of the Santa Chiara Polyptych. The evocative representation of the Magdalene in the triptychs for private devotion produced by Paolo's workshop served a similar end, reminding devotees of the Magdalene's exemplary life of asceticism and penance. Beyond this, Christ's charge to the Magdalene, to go and tell the other disciples of his resurrection, also fits with the broader Franciscan emphasis on evangelizing.

The story of Christ's deeds on earth concludes with the Ascension (figs. 4, 35). Paolo's representation aligns closely with the first chapter of Acts.[232] Christ tells the disciples that they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and that they will spread the gospel across the world. Then, "while they looked on, he was raised up: and a cloud received him out of their sight."[233] The next verse relates that while they were watching, "two men stood by them in white garments."[234] They tell the disciples (Ye men of Galilee) that Jesus will return to them in the manner that they have watched him depart. Paolo adds the visual elements of a radiant nimbus interspersed with stars that recalls the heavenly light emanating from the throne in the central panel. While the sparse biblical account does not give them any special role in the Ascension, Peter and the Virgin are especially prominent in this scene. Peter's gesture of amazement recalls his active roles at the Last Supper and the Betrayal scene. The Virgin has the greatest prominence in Paolo's representation, even though she is not included in the collective address to "Ye Men of Galilee." She locks eyes with Christ, a gaze that is reinforced with hand gestures. Christ extends his right hand to the Virgin and the body of Apostles, and the Virgin raises her

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[232] Acts 1:8–11.
[233] Acts 1:9
[234] Acts 1:10.

hands in supplication. The prominence of the Virgin and Peter links this representation to the remaining scenes that bring the altarpiece's narratives to a resolution.

The author of the *Meditations* explicitly underscores the theological importance of the Ascension. It is one of many moments in the text when he reintroduces an interpretation from Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs. He writes that even though Christ had already triumphed over the Passion with Resurrection, "the gate of Paradise was still closed, the holy fathers were still not gone to the Father. All this was completed in the Ascension."[235] The author emphasizes the importance of this event for humanity, "for human nature today is exalted above the heavens, because if Christ had not ascended we could not have received that gift of the Holy Spirit that we so rightly solemnize."[236] The text accounts for the Virgin's prominence in the scene, "who saw her Son regally diademed, raised as the true Lord, ascending above the heights."[237] Bridegroom imagery is used to present the Virgin's gaze upon the ascendant Christ as a model of devotional behavior for the readers of the *Meditations:*

> Wherefore His words and deeds are to be considered more attentively, for every faithful soul owes it to her Bridegroom, her Lord, and her God to observe his departure more vigilantly, to embrace in mind what was said and done by Him more intently, and to recommend herself to Him more devoutly and humbly, wholly withdrawing her soul from everything else.[238]

The repeated recourse to Bridegroom imagery in the Santa Chiara Polyptych helps unite the altarpiece's narrative threads across its various components. It establishes ties not only between the Christological scenes and the central panel, but also between the life of Christ and the

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[235] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 382.
[236] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 382.
[237] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 382.
[238] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 374–5.

Franciscan sequence in the upper register, prompting a kind of devotion that depends on careful reflection and analogy.

The six scenes of the Franciscan sequence that occupy the polyptych's upper register are a distinct unit of the altarpiece's iconographic program. Their separation from the Christological sequence is reinforced by their smaller scale. Yet the two scenes that frame stories of Francis and Clare integrate this component with the rest of the altarpiece's encompassing Christian narrative. The Franciscan sequence begins at the left with Pentecost and ends at the right with the Last Judgement (figs. 36, 44). The scene of Pentecost is a concise and effectively organized adaptation to the to the small scale. In it, the twelve Apostles are shown seated in a circle on a raised dais, their foreheads bearing the flames that represent the Holy Spirit. God is represented with a nimbus at the top of the composition. Peter is elevated above the other Apostles at the center of the circle, alluding to the sermon he gave halting the confusion brought about by the miraculous understanding of diverse tongues.[239] The broader Christian relevance of Pentecost is as the moment when the Holy Spirit consecrates Christ's earliest followers to spread the gospel throughout the world.[240] Its appearance as the introduction to a sequence devoted to Francis and Clare is readily explained on this basis. Pentecost took on an institutional significance for the Franciscans, who saw themselves as a renewed Apostolate of Christ, ready to reform the church.[241] General Chapter meetings typically took place on the Feast of Pentecost.[242]

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[239] Acts 2:14–40.
[240] For reflections on the meaning of Pentecost, see Adolph Katzellenbogen, "The Central Tympanum at Vézelay, Its Encyclopedic Meaning and Its Relation to the First Crusade," *Art Bulletin* 26 (1944)a; 141–51.
[241] Flora, *Cimabue and the Franciscans,* 108.
[242] Cooper and Robson, *The Making of Assisi,* 192.

Pentecost is a thus a fitting introduction for the following two scenes from the biographies of Clare and Francis. For both saints, the scene is the beginning of their mendicant vocation. Clare escaped the privileged surrounding of her noble family's home and fled to the Portiuncula, where Francis received her and accepted her profession to join the Order (fig. 37). The representation of clothing is especially important for the meaning of the scene, and the iconography of the altarpiece as a whole. The Legend of Saint Clare describes how the friars cut her hair, and "she put aside every kind of her fine dress."[243] As she kneels at the left, Francis places a striped mantle over Clare's grey habit; the Franciscan chord is visible around her waist. She then walks forward to the right, enveloped in the striped mantle. This particular mode of dress is seen primarily in northern Italian fourteenth and early fifteenth-century representations.[244] No documentary evidence specifically accounts for it, but it is likely that the striped mantle is an accurate representation of a prosaic detail of fourteenth-century domestic life. The heavy striped cloth was similar to the kind of all-purpose fabric used for floor mats and bed coverings in humble households. Saint Clare's followers demonstrated their commitment to poverty by clothing themselves in a utilitarian material familiar from daily life.

While the order of the scenes laid out in the Santa Chiara Polyptych places appropriate emphasis on Clare, it does not correspond to the order of events as recounted in Franciscan histories. Rather, the lives of Francis and Clare are intermingled in ways that are much less about the chronology than they are about the conditions and choices entailed in a Clarissan vocation. In fact the scene of Saint Clare entering the monastery is followed by and paired with the scene of Saint Francis renouncing his worldly goods. This pairing offers an instructive gloss on the

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[243] Thomas of Celano, "The Legend of Saint Clare," 286.

[244] Cordelia Warr, "The Striped Mantle of the Poor Clares: Image and Text in the Later Middle Ages," *Arte Cristiana* 84 (1998): 415–430.

founders' stories, indicating that, to be worthy of Clare's humble striped mantle, one must be

prepared for the total renunciation enacted by Francis. A schematic representation of a church

façade behind Saint Clare visually reinforces her renunciation of worldly values. The simple

façade features a darkened portal immediately to the right of the robed saint, suggesting her

entrance into the cloistered space of San Damiano. The simplified representation of a pedimented

façade containing a rose window above a central portal is repeated in the following scene,

creating a visual connection between Clare's adoption of the habit and Francis's renunciation of

secular clothing (fig. 38). While Clare puts on a new type of garment to represent the beginning

of her mendicant calling, Francis signals the beginning of his vocation by divesting himself of

clothing. To prove the strength of his resolve against his father's exhortations to return to secular

life, Francis removed all of his clothes in front of the citizens of Assisi who had gathered to

watch the audience with the bishop that his father had requested. The bishop embraced him

within his cloak, thereby publicly sanctioning his dramatically professed vocation.

The pair of scenes representing renunciation as a Franciscan principle are followed in the Santa

Chiara Polyptych by a sequence of two scenes devoted to three episodes in Francis's life: the

Stigmata, the Death of Saint Francis, and the Confirmation of the Stigmata (figs. 18, 39). Paolo's

representation of the Stigmata is conventional. As noted in the first chapter, it includes an

inscription with a quotation from the fifty-first Psalm, which connects the scene to the moment

when Francis discerned the nature of his calling. The Franciscan poet Jacopone of Todi used the

same language to describe the Virgin's emotions as she stood at the foot of the cross. For viewers

able to stand close enough to the polyptych to read the inscription, it could serve as a prompt to

reflect on Christ's suffering with the same sorrowing intensity as Francis and the Virgin.

The miraculous wounds that Francis acquired in the Stigmata are visible in the following scene, the Death of Saint Francis. In this scene Francis is laid on a funeral bier in the company of a bishop and other Franciscans (fig. 39). Thomas of Celano's biographies describe the crowds that came to mourn Francis's death and marvel at the stigmata.[245] Men had visions of Francis's soul ascending to heaven and the gathered crowds carried his body in a procession to his childhood parish church of San Giorgio. Paolo's representation takes its format from the fresco in Assisi and involves aspects of all the extended descriptions in Thomas of Celano's first and second biographies.

While Julian Gardner emphasized Paolo's depiction of Francis's Renunciation as being especially close to the Assisi frescoes (figs. 38, 40), the Death of Saint Francis in the polyptych shows a more direct engagement with the Assisi fresco as precedents.[246] In his painting Paolo combined two scenes on the south wall of the nave in the Upper Church (figs. 41, 42), namely, the *Death of Saint Francis* and the *Verification of the Stigmata.* In the Death of Saint Francis in the Upper Church friars are shown mourning their founder's passing, as his body lies on the ground laid out on a simple wooden plank. Clergymen and more friars are shown gathering in the background, preparing for the procession into the city. High above the gathered assembly, two angels carry Francis's soul. It is represented with a half-length portrait enclosed within a medallion-like halo.

A second scene in the Assisi frescoes depicts the Confirmation of the Stigmata, an episode that first appeared in Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior.* The Assisi fresco shows the

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[245] Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies,* 322–332; 536–540.
[246] Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 19. Gardner responded to the Renunciation scene by opining that "Paolo Veneziano is unmistakably copying the same episode in the Legend of San Francesco at Assisi."

protagonist of the episode, the learned knight Gerolamo, amid the crowd of townspeople who came to see the saint's body. Gerolamo is easily distinguishable as the central figure, who touches the wound in Francis's side. Like doubting Thomas, Gerolamo would not believe the veracity of the Stigmata until he touched the wounds himself. The Assisi fresco represents the moment of his conversion to belief. Giotto and his workshop assistants set the scene in a church interior. Francis lies on a bier draped with a patterned silk textile beneath a wooden beam that supports sacred images, including a large-scale crucifix.

Paolo's representation in the Santa Chiara Polyptych combines elements of the *Death of Saint Francis* and the *Verification of the Stigmata.* It may also include a representation of Francis's canonization ceremony described at the end of Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure's biographies (fig. 39). In this scene Paolo created a synthesis. Francis lies on a bier covered with an elaborately patterned textile. Behind the bier, a man who wears a bishop's mitre and cope over a Franciscan habit makes the sign of the blessing as he reads from an open book. Above the blessing, two angels carry a cloth that contains a half-length representation of Francis's soul. The man's clothing may identify him as Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227–1241), who, officiated Francis's canonization in 1228.[247] In Paolo's painting he is shown wearing the Franciscan habit to represent his tenure as protector of the Franciscans before being elected Pope, when he was still known as Cardinal Ugolino.[248] In this role he wrote the first Rule for the Clarissans.[249]

While the Assisi fresco is restrained in its ornament, Paolo's painting is elaborately decorated in ways that emphasize certain figures. The bishop wears a red mantle decorated with a gold pattern of palmettes and Francis's bier is covered with a similarly rich textile. This

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[247] Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order,* 86
[248] Moorman, 47.
[249] Moorman, 34–5.

backdrop brings attention to one of the polyptych's most enigmatic details, the donor figure

kneeling in front of Francis's bier. The woman is represented on a much smaller scale than the

saint, the friars, and the bishop. The change in scale, and the barrier of the bier underscore her

separateness from the saint and the professed religious that surround him. Julian Gardner

interpreted the placement of the donor figure as a reinvention of the story of the knight

Gerolamo.[250] Like the doubting secular knight, the donor is represented in perpetual

confrontation with the saint's miraculous body, where she has the potential to be converted to

belief.

Previous authors, including Garnder, have suggested that the woman is the convent's

abbess.[251] There is certainly a precedent for abbesses commissioning works in Clarissan

institutions, most notably in the cross by a painter of the Umbrian school for the convent of Santa

Chiara in Assisi.[252] The suppedaneum includes a donor portrait of a kneeling woman wearing a

simple habit and a black veil on her head. While there is significant overpainting on the figure in

the Assisi cross, an original inscription clearly identifies her as Benedetta, the first abbess to lead

the convent after Saint Clare. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the woman in Venice's Santa

Chiara Polyptych is also the institution's highest-ranking member. As has been demonstrated by

analysis of the 1653 archive register, the convent's early leadership had no qualms about

accepting pious gifts.

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[250] Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 19.

[251] See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 1970, 128; Gardner, "Paolo Veneziano as Narrator," 19; and Silver, "Reframing Panel Paintings as Venetian Commodity," 2020, 73. Muraro identifies the figures as the patron of the polyptych and a nun. Gardner includes the observation that she is the institution's abbess in his interpretation. Silver identifies the patroness as the abbess Francesca Dandolo.

[252] For a catalog entry, see William Cook, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi* (Florence: Olshki, 1999), cat. no. 28.

There are, however, problems with this identification. As Paolo followed the contemporary norm of representing Clarissans wearing striped mantles, it seems arbitrary that the abbess of the convent would not also be dressed in the Clarissan clothing. The Franciscan habit was a matter of debate in numerous amendments to the constitutions. Urban IV's rule for the Poor Clares, which was followed by the convent of Santa Chiara in Venice, ordered that the Clarissans' habits should be of humble material and "neither completely white nor completely black," which conforms with the grey worn by Clare in the scene of her investiture.[253] While she does wear a black head cloth like Clare, the woman kneeling at Francis's bier has no chord around her waist and wears a bright blue robe. A single white line along her sleeve suggests some form of decoration appropriate for upper class clothing. One of the lay donors that kneels at the feet of Paolo's lively Madonna *Platytera* has a similar adornment to her clothing (fig. 43). The woman represented in the Santa Chiara Polyptych is therefore likely a laywoman, and not a Clarissan. Her placement in front of the bier, the difference in scale, and even Gardner's interpretation in light of the Gerolamo story support the identification of the figure as a lay donor. One donation recorded in the 1653 register suggests a potential identification of this figure as Maria Dandolo. The register records Maria Dandolo's decision to leave all of her possessions to the convent in 1340. Such a donation might have been a fitting occasion for a commemoration of the sort we see in the Santa Chiara altarpiece.[254]

The Franciscan sequence ends with the encompassing narrative of the Last Judgment (fig. 44). In light of their vocation preaching penance, this subject had a strong resonance for the

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[253] Cordelia Warr, "Religious Dress in Italy in the Late Middle Ages," in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning, and Identity,* ed. Amy De La Haye, 79–92 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 82.

[254] ASV, CRS, Convento di Santa Chiara, Pergamene, 3, "1340, 8 Marzo, Testamento della ND Maria Dandolo con il quale lassa al monasterio di Santa Chiara tutti li suoi Beni…"

Franciscans. Bonaventure emphasized the Franciscan interest in the Apocalypse by describing

Francis as the Angel of the Sixth seal in the prologue to the Legenda Maior.[255] In the "angel

ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God," Bonaventure interpreted

a reference to Francis's stigmata wounds. Where Pentecost demarcates the beginning of the

Christian faith following Christ's Ascension, the Last Judgment represents its resolution. In

between these two epochal moments, Francis and Clare lived admirable lives of ascetic devotion.

The souls of the elect are surrounded by verdant greenery in a marble enclosure at the lower left

of the composition. The river of blood that flows from the throne towards the right clearly

indicates the fate of the damned. The narratives represented in the Santa Chiara Polyptych

outline a path to salvation, attained by contemplating Christ's suffering and following the

exemplary lives of Francis and Clare.

Before proceeding to the central panel, where the altarpiece's narratives are brought to a

resolution with the Coronation of the Virgin, it is worth addressing the question of the missing

portion in the upper register. The small hieratic figures interspersed among the narrative scenes

in the upper register are an appropriate basis for speculation. The Four Evangelists appearing in

small aedicules between the scenes of the Franciscan sequence emphasize the gospel story of

Christ as the polyptych's most important message. They also reinforce the common trope of

Francis as a second Christ. The standard image for the topmost position of Paolo Veneziano's

altarpieces is the Crucifixion, as demonstrated in the Parma and Worcester Triptychs and the

Santa Lucia polyptych. The Crucifixion scene on the right-hand side of the altarpiece negates

this subject as a candidate for the missing pediment. The figures of the prophets David and Isaiah

positioned on either side of the shell lunette offer a helpful suggestion that is reinforced by other

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[255] Cooper and Robson, *The Making of Assisi,* 201.

surviving examples from altarpieces by Paolo Veneziano and his circle. Both carry scrolls with Old Testament verses. On the left, David's scroll includes a quotation from Psalm 71, verse 11: "and all kings of the earth shall adore him. All nations [shall serve him]." [ADORABU(N)T EU(M) O(MNE)S REGES T(ER)R(A)E. O(MNE)S GENTES (SERVIENT EI,). Isaiah's scroll places emphasis on the Virgin with a quotation from chapter 7, verse 14, that the messiah shall be known by the sign of his conception by a Virgin, and that he shall be called Emmanuel [ECCE VIRGO CONCEIPIET ET PARIET FILIUM].[256] Based on the example of the Saint Lucy polyptych of Krk, it is likely that the missing portion had three compartments, with representations of the Annunciation framing a central image of Christ or God the Father (fig. 8). The altarpiece in Padua's Diocesan museum from Piove di Sacco offers a potential solution with its central image of Christ as Man of Sorrows.[257] Another representation of Christ in this manner is seen in the central panel of the upper register of the *Pala Feriale* (fig. 69).

Reemphasizing the importance of clothing as a signifier in the altarpiece's iconography brings our attention back to the narrative trajectory that comes to a resolution in the central panel (fig. 27). Clare's beginning of her mendicant vocation is signified with the historically specific detail of utilitarian striped fabric. Francis proves his dedication to his calling by publicly removing his secular clothing. Humble materials and a lack of clothing distinguish the historically recent narratives of Francis and Clare from the past and future Biblical narratives in the lower portion of the altarpiece. In the Christological sequence, Christ and the Virgin wear blue robes that shine with Byzantine style chrysography. In the central panel, they sit enthroned as the Bride and Bridegroom of the Song of Songs, wearing blue mantles over bright red tunics.

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[256] Isaiah 7:14, "propter hoc dabit Dominus ipse vobis signum ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitis nomen eius Emmanuhel."

[257] Muaro, *Paolo da Venezia,* "Comparative Illustrations," fig. 99.

Their tunics, mantles, and the cloth of honor that angels suspend behind them are all adorned

with gold patterns. The regular repeat of the patterns brings to mind woven silks, which were a

valuable commodity in the thirteenth and fourteenth-century global trade economy. This kind of

luxury textile was woven on draw looms from brightly dyed silk with gold and silver threads to

create the patterns.

Silver and gold features prominently in the poetic Bridegroom imagery of the

Meditations. To focus his readers attention on the devout soul's union with God, the author cited

Bernard of Clairvaux's 41st sermon on the Song of Songs. In the passage Bernard identifies the

bride's attendants as an analogy for the angels. They speak collectively in verse ten of the first

chapter of the Song of Songs, saying "Let us make royal gold vestments inlaid with silver."

Bernard expounds on this quotation, interpreting it as a representation of the highest order of

contemplation, which is the Majesty of God:

> But note that royal vestments are offered, of gold, it says, inlaid with silver. Gold is the
> splendor of divinity; silver is the wisdom that one must have. Several signs, as of variety
> are shown by this resplendent gold, which those who are to be goldsmiths of the supernal
> mystery must design and transplant within from the strength of the soul, which I do not
> believe to be anything but to weave some special similitudes and to relate the most sure
> sense of divine wisdom to the sight of the contemplating spirit, so that it may see at least
> in the mirror, in likeness, that which cannot yet be seen in any way face to face.[258]

The polyptych's viewers are invited by Paolo Veneziano's representation to fashion an image of

their own soul's union with Christ. The scale hierarchy that progresses from the Franciscan

register to the scenes from the life of Christ, and finally to the central panel, establishes the

Coronation of the Virgin as the highest order of contemplation. Here, viewers see the majesty of

God represented with copious applications of gold and silver. The textiles that Christ and the

Virgin wear are covered with golden patterns. The sun beneath Christ's feet is painted over a

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[258] *Meditations on the Life of Christ,* 275.

layer of reflective gold. Silver adds luster to the moon beneath the Virgin's feet and the pipes of the portable organs that angels play at the sides of the throne.

The reference to chapter thirteen of First Corinthians that concludes the quotation establishes the polyptych's images as a mirror. The theological traditions of medieval Christianity, and the emotionally affective traditions of Franciscan devotional culture are the framework through which this mirror offered to the convent's audiences a reflection of the majesty of God that should be the focus of their contemplation. Christ's suffering and Francis and Clare's renunciation come together in the sumptuously clothed union of Christ and the Virgin following her Assumption – the ultimate role models for the Clarissans' emulation. While the *Meditations* are evidence of the persistent popularity of Bernard of Clairvaux's interpretations in Paolo Veneziano's time, Clare's own writings attest to their centrality in her vocation. She opens her third letter to Agnes of Prague by addressing the recipient as the "sister and spouse of the Most High King of Heaven."[259] In the second letter, Clare praises Agnes's virtues as "that perfection with which that King will join you to Himself in the heavenly bridal chamber where He is seated in glory on a starry throne."[260] Finally, in the fourth letter, Clare presents a contemplative model that is carried through in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and Paolo Veneziano's painting of the Coronation of the Virgin. Clare exhorts Agnes to gaze daily on the mirror of Christ's perfection. Clare refers to the text of the forty-fifth Psalm, implying that by continuingly studying Christ's perfection, Agnes will be become adorned like the queen who wears gilded clothing at the king's right hand in the tenth verse:

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[259] Saint Clare, "The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague," in *The Lady – Clare of Assisi,* 50.
[260] Saint Clare, "The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague," in *The Lady – Clare of Assisi,* 47.

That you may adorn yourself completely, within and without, covered and arrayed in needlework and similarly adorned with the flowers and garments of all the virtues, as is becoming, the daughter and dearest bride of the Most High King.[261]

By following the role model of the Virgin who is enthroned next to Christ, the Clarissan (and any devout believer) takes on the Virgin's maternal role. By reflecting the virtue of Christ through her dedication to contemplation, the Clarissan gives birth to Christ in the world.[262]

Paolo Veneziano's elaborate representation in the central panel fulfills the exhortation in the quote from Bernard of Clairvaux that appeared in the *Meditations.* Using the altarpiece as an apparatus, viewers could become goldsmiths of the supernal mystery, weaving garments of gold and silver for their vision of the Virgin's union with Christ. Paolo chose to represent this vision in a manner that would have been recognizable to a fourteenth-century Venetian audience. The textiles seen in the central panel are a historically determined and pervasive aspect of Paolo Veneziano's art that connects his workshop practice to the global trade networks of the late medieval world and an approach to representing authority that was ubiquitous throughout Europe. The details of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's relationship to these broader trends will be explored in detail in the following chapter.

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[261] Saint Clare, "The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague," in *The Lady – Clare of Assisi,* 55. The editor of this edition of Clare's writings notes the difficulty of the translation of the Latin Vulgate used in Clare's time, which describes the Queen "circumdate varietate." The Douay-Rheims translation (in which the Psalm is numbered 44) reads, "The queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety."

[262] Delio, "Clare of Assisi and the Mysticism of Motherhood," 32.

3. Clothing Christ and the Virgin: Paolo Veneziano and Luxury Silks

In the central panel of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, the dark flesh tones of the protagonists' faces and hands are nearly lost amidst a dense accumulation of golden ornamental patterns (fig. 27). Christ and the Virgin wear ultramarine mantels over red robes. Two angels suspend a yellow cloth of honor behind them. Each of these textiles bears a different pattern – a total of six in this panel alone. Narrowing consideration even to this single panel makes it clear that the depiction of colorful patterned textiles was a central concern for the workshop's representation of sacred subject matter. The even distribution and regular repetition of the patterns of gold vines, leaves, pomegranates, and palmettes suggest woven textiles, a valuable commodity in the trade networks of fourteenth-century Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.[263]

The textiles seen in the Santa Chiara Polyptych are accurate representations of the types of goods that were traded into the European economy through Venice in the fourteenth century. An Italian production scene was also developed in response to global trade networks. The language of inventories and surviving textiles from papal treasuries and elite burials show how silk textiles interwoven with gold thread were a statement of wealth, cosmopolitan sophistication, and authority. Scrutiny of this aspect of Paolo Veneziano's art is an opportunity to deepen understanding of his practice and trace his engagement with his historical context. It makes it possible to conjecture what the textiles seen in the central panel signified for the audiences who viewed the altarpiece in the convent of Santa Chiara.

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[263] Vera-Simone Schulz, "Entangled Identities: Textiles and the Art and Architecture of the Apennine Peninsula in a Trans-Mediterranean Perspective," in *The Hidden Life of Textiles in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean,* ed. Nikolaos Vryzidis, 117–154 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 130.

Paolo and his workshop collaborators responded to a broadly diffuse taste for Asian-influenced textile designs. The textiles are representative of Venice's mercantilist legacy; at the same time, they connect Paolo's art to a ubiquitous aesthetic that was used to represent power throughout Europe. Recent technical discoveries show that the artist and his workshop used techniques consistent with the most well-known painters of other Italian centers to represent luxury textiles. Surviving evidence of agreements between painters and pattern designers, and the survival of textile designs in Iacopo Bellini's sketchbook, serve as a point of departure for speculation about how Paolo Veneziano engaged with the textile industry in the context of his workshop.

Paolo Veneziano emphasized detailed representations of textiles throughout his oeuvre,[264] an interest that he shared in common with well-known masters in other centers.[265] The ubiquity of patterned silks in the art of his time informed Boccacio's (1313–1375) statement in his commentary on the Divine Comedy, in which he described oriental textiles, commonly referred to as "Tartar Cloth" as so magnificently woven that no painter would be capable of using his brush to represent them.[266] It was not only aesthetic appeal that inspired artists and writers like Boccaccio to focus their attention on silk textiles with golden patterns. The "Tartar Cloths" mentioned by Boccaccio were valuable commodities.[267] In thirteenth and fourteenth-

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[264] Cathleen Hoeniger, "Le stoffe nella pittura veneziana del Trecento," in *La pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento,* ed. Mauro Lucco, vol. 2 (Milan: Electa, 1992), 442–462.

[265] See Cathleen Hoeniger, "Cloth of Gold and Silver: Simone Martini's Techniques for Representing Luxury Textiles," *Gesta* 30, 2 (1991): 154–162 and Lisa Monnas, "Silk Textiles in the Paintings of Bernardo Daddi, Andrea di Cione, and Their Followers," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 53, 1 (1990): 39–58.

[266] Schulz, "Entangled Identities: Textiles and the Art and Architecture of the Apennine Peninsula," 130.

[267] David Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 197–240.

century sources, Tartar Cloth was the generalized designation for silk textiles with patterns of

gold thread produced in the Mongol-ruled territories of the Middle East and Central Asia.[268]

Silks from Mongol-ruled territories were disseminated throughout Europe, as shown by

surviving examples found in elite burials and church treasuries in Italy, Spain, England,

Scandinavia, and in cities along the Baltic coast in north Germany.[269] In the fourteenth century,

new adaptations of Asian designs were produced in the Italian silk industry; ornamental motifs

from varied traditions including mythical creatures, palmettes, and foliate vines were synthesized

in the works of Italian weavers and painters.[270] Silks from Mamluk Egypt were also traded in

Europe and adapted by European silk designers and painters.[271] In both Europe and Asia, silk

textiles with gold patterns were integral to displays of authority, and therefore fitting clothing for

the triumphal presentation of Christ and the Virgin in the central panel of the Santa Chiara

Polyptych. [272]

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[268] Anne Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks Woven with Gold and Silver (13th and 14th Centuries)," *Islamic Art* III (1988-1989): 95–172.

[269] David Jacoby, "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols: Patterns of Trade and Distribution in the West," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe,* ed. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta, 93–123 (Riggisberg: Abegg Stfiftung, 2016), 93.

[270] See Anne Wardwell, "The Stylistic Development of 14th and 15th-Century Italian Silk Design," *Aachener Kunstblätter* (1977): 177–226 and ibid., "Fligh of the Phoenix: Crosscurrents in Late Thirteenth to Fourteenth-Century Silk Patterns and Motifs," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 74, 1 (1987): 2–35.

[271] Jacoby, "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols," 94.

[272] Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World: Papers from a Colloquium in Memory of Richard Ettinghausen,* ed. Priscilla Soucek, 25–38 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). Golombek cites the Santa Chiara polyptych on page 29. She compares the representation of Christ's clothing to a common medieval practice. An aesthetically pleasing part of an imported textile, one with an Arabic inscription for example, could be excised and stitched onto another garment. The rectangle at the chest of Christ's tunic appears to represent this practice. For a general overview of textiles' association with representations of power see Louise Mackie, "Textile Power, Industry, and Characteristics," in *Symbols of Power: Luxury Textiles from Islamic Lands,* by Louise Mackie, 16–42 (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2015) Exh. Cat.

In the Santa Chiara Polyptych (fig. 27), Paolo Veneziano concentrated the representation of patterned textiles in the central panel. Christ and the Virgin are enveloped in a dense screen of ornamental motifs. In the yellow cloth of honor, the pattern of blue lotus flowers interspersed with palmettes and foliate vines conforms with the rise and fall of the folded drapery. A prominent border of Arabic pseudo-script at the center of the textile maintains the sense of movement as it wends its way over the surface of the draped textile's folds. The cushion on which Christ and the Virgin sit also has a band of pseudo-script, continuing the compositional device of a vertical axis that activates the space between the central protagonists.

Christ and the Virgin each wear blue mantels over rose colored tunics. The Virgin's tunic is adorned with pomegranates, while Christ's has palmettes. The palmettes are echoed on the Virgin's blue mantle where a variation of the motif is repeated amongst foliate vines. On Christ's tunic, a similar network of vines blooms into acanthus leaves and cabbage like heads that recall the finials encountered in contemporary Gothic architecture. This particular motif is unique in Paolo Veneziano's oeuvre. Beyond the profusion of patterns in the central panel, gilded patterns are found only occasionally in the rest of the altarpiece. A red textile with a blue border with pseudo-Arabic and blue palmettes adorns the funeral bier in the scene of Saint Francis's death and canonization (fig. 39). The Pope officiating Francis's canonization mass wears a cope with the same pattern. A visual affiliation between Francis and Christ is also established in the Crucifixion scene (fig. 33), where Christ's light pink tunic has a pattern of golden palmettes. We see the garment in question crumpled in the hands of the soldiers who cast lots for it. This garment was interpreted in medieval Christian legends as the garment woven from a single thread by the Virgin. It was believed to have miraculously grown to fit Christ as he aged and was also cited as proof that he owned possessions in debates over the interpretation of Francis's call

to poverty.[273] The patterned textiles call attention to the key moments of Christ's sacrifice, Saint Francis's canonization, and the triumphal presentation of Christ and the Virgin in the central panel.

Thirteen different types of patterns have been cataloged in surviving works by Paolo Veneziano.[274] Palmettes, lotus flowers, pomegranates, and quatrefoils were the mainstays of the workshop's stock repertoire. The interest in detailed patterns, including some of these specific motifs, was also sustained by succeeding generations of Venetian painters. Lorenzo Veneziano (doc. 1356–1372), Stefano da Sant' Agnese (active 1369–1388), Jacobello di Bonomo (active 1375–1385), Jacobello del Fiore (active by 1400–d.1439), and the painters Donato and Catarino (signed jointly, doc. 1362–1390) all represented their holy figures clothed in brightly colored textiles ornamented with gold patterns.[275] Most of Paolo Veneziano's ornamental motifs are found across multiple works, where they were recombined with one another and rendered in different colors. The large motif of the blue lotus flower was especially well suited to the cloths of honor suspended behind enthroned holy figures. It can be seen in seven of Paolo Veneziano's panels.[276] Similarly, the pomegranate motif, existing in two variations, is seen on robes worn by the Virgin and female saints in six of Paolo Veneziano's works.[277] Quatrefoils and trefoils, which recall the design of contemporary Gothic architecture and goldwork, occur less frequently; they can be found adorning cloths of honor, cushions, and saints' robes in four panel

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[273] Flora, "The Poor Clares and the Clothing of Christ," 471.
[274] Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1967), 523.
[275] Francesca Flores d'Arcais, "Venezia," in *La Pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento,* ed. Mauro Lucco, 17–88 (Milan: Electa, 1992), 57–87.
[276] Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei,* 1967, nos. 462 and 462a-f.
[277] Klesse, 1967, nos. 162, 162a-d and 163.

paintings.[278] The palmette is by far the most pervasive motif. Applied with a wide degree of variation, it adorns cloths of honor and the clothes of numerous holy figures in approximately thirty works.[279] The palmette is the most ubiquitous of the textile motifs represented by Paolo Veneziano. It has a long and varied history stretching back to late antiquity and is seen in textile traditions across the Islamic world.[280] In his frequent representation of the motif, Paolo is united with a host of textile producers and painters who were operative throughout Europe and the Mediterranean (figs. 45, 46).

Despite their broad dissemination in his oeuvre, Paolo Veneziano's textile patterns have not received focused attention in the literature. When Paolo Veneziano's representations of luxurious textiles are discussed, it tends to be only in passing. In her essay published in *La pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento,* Cathleen Hoeniger treated the painter's technique the same way most scholars have discussed his pictorial style. For his frequent recourse to mordant gilding, Paolo is perceived as a retrograde artist in opposition to his contemporaries in Florence and Venice, for whom the *sgraffito* technique was more common.[281] The criticism takes up the refrain that Paolo's use of mordant gilding resulted from his dependence on Byzantine precedents.[282] However, Paolo and his workshop collaborators were also conversant in the techniques that scholars traditionally associated with other masters.

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[278] See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 106, pls. 79–81; 117, pl. 168; 118, 36–39; 120, pls. 117–119; 144, figs. 30–32; see also Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 2003, 20; 11; 26 and Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei,* 1967, no. 385a.

[279] Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei,* 1967, nos. 153, 153a-c, 154, 155, 156, 156a-c, 156e, 157, 157a-e, 158, 158c, 160, 164a, 327, 385a, b, 460, 460b-c, 461.

[280] Klesse, 63–77.

[281] Cathleen Hoeniger, "Cloth of Gold and Silver: Simone Martini's Techniques for Representing Luxury Textiles," 154–162.

[282] Hoeniger, "Le stoffe," 452.

Mordant gilding involves a direct application of the pattern onto the painted surface. A sticky mordant is painted over a drawn motif. Gold is then selectively applied to the areas painted with the mordant.[283] The gold that does not adhere to the mordant can be easily brushed away. The sgraffito technique, on the other hand, makes use of the accumulated layers of tempera painting and requires more steps. For this reason it has been described as a more refined or advanced technique than mordant gilding. To create patterns using sgraffito, the painter selectively scratches away a layer of paint that had previously been applied over a gilded layer beneath. Paolo's preference for mordant gilding may have also been a practical choice, as the technique offered the advantages of speed and economy. It allowed the painter to cover more ground with less gold and fill in a patterned textile with less labor.[284]

Closer looking reveals that Paolo used a greater variety of techniques than had previously been recognized. In the artist's earliest dated work, the Vicenza polyptych of 1333, a small round punchmark was used to articulate the folds of the golden robes worn by Christ and the Virgin, and the drapery folds were deepened with lake pigments (fig. 47). Similar techniques were used for Christ's clothing in the *Virgin and Child Enthroned* from Carpineta di Cesena, dated to 1349 by an inscription.[285] Paolo also practiced the sgraffito technique discussed above. In the artist's latest dated work, the Coronation of the Virgin in The Frick Collection, Paolo used a broad range of techniques (fig. 48). In its current state of preservation, the center of the composition is dominated by the dark blue ultramarine robes worn by Christ and the Virgin. In 2014, Andrea De Marchi and Roberta Maria Salvador recognized the sgraffito technique in this area of the

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[283] Hoeniger, "Le stoffe," 457.
[284] Monnas, "Silk Textiles in the Paintings of Bernardo Daddi, Andrea di Cione, and their Followers," 46.
[285] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 104; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 176, cat. no. 18.

composition.[286] Though it is now tarnished, a layer of silver gilding beneath the ultramarine

tempera was the original base that allowed the ornamental patterns of palmettes to shine

resplendently.

Paolo's workshop also made liberal use of laminate gilding to heighten the material

realism of details throughout the panel in the Frick Collection. Beneath their ultramarine

mantles, Christ and the Virgin wear gold robes with finely tooled borders. Layers of lake

pigments painted over the gold laminate create the appearance of drapery folds.[287] Strategically

applied layers of silver gilding lend an extra pitch of realism to the pipes of the portable organs

that angels play on both sides of the throne. Perhaps most strikingly, the layers of gold and silver

enliven attributes of the sun and moon beneath the feet of Christ and the Virgin. The details of

sun, moon, and organ pipes were represented with the same techniques in the Santa Chiara

Polyptych. Throughout his documented career, Paolo Veneziano and his workshop used

reflective metals to lend the depicted subject matter a greater sense of immediacy and material

presence. Mordant gilding was not the only method employed by the workshop, but one of the

many techniques deployed for heightening the sense of realism in its paintings.

By comparison, in the Byzantine tradition with which Paolo is often aligned, mordant

gilding had a circumscribed use. Regularized gold striations called chrysography was used to

represent the inner divine radiance of only the holiest figures. It is typically reserved for the

figure of Christ.[288] Jaroslav Folda makes the distinction between Byzantine chrysography and

what he designates as "gold highlighting" in the Italian painting tradition. He argues that in

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[286] De Marchi, "La ricezione dell'oro," 17–19; and Salvador, "Girali e racimoli," 113.
[287] De Marchi, 17.
[288] Jaroslav Folda, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child Hodegetria and the Art of Chrysography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), xxxv.

Italian painting gold striations represent the reflection of light from the surrounding heavenly atmosphere.[289] Folda notes that for textiles enlivened with ornamental patterns, the gold threads can be understood to be reflecting this ambient light.[290] Byzantine style chrysography is not common in Paolo Veneziano's oeuvre. In fact, it appears only rarely.[291] Paolo used mordant gilding most frequently to represent textile patterns and other details such as throne architecture and the armor worn by centurions and warrior saints. For the works that cannot be securely dated, the presence of chrysography is often taken as evidence of an earlier date. Panels attributed to Paolo's early contemporaries seem, at first glance, to support this conclusion. The Master of the Washington Coronation and the Master of the San Pantalon Dossal were more consistent in their use of Byzantine-style chrysography.[292] Paolo Veneziano, on the other hand, used mordant gilding to represent textile patterns much more frequently than he did for Byzantine-style chrysography.

Moreover Paolo's paintings do not generally observe the distinction between gilding as a representation of light that emanates from a holy body and gilding that represents reflected light. In the Santa Chiara Polyptych's lateral scenes the robes of Jesus, the Virgin, and the Magi have Byzantine style gold striations, which encouraged some scholars to suggest an earlier date for the

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[289] Folda, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting,* xxxv.
[290] Folda, xxxvi.
[291] For examples of Byzantine-style chrysography (citations of catalog entries following title of each work), see *The Elevation of the Magdalene* in the Saints of the Worcester Art Museum (Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 135 and Pedrocco, no. 6); the *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* (Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 127–128 and Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* no. 7); the *Pala Feriale* (Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 124–125 and Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* no. 16); and *The Coronation of the Virgin* in The Frick Collection, (Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 116–117 and Pedrocco, Paolo Veneziano, 2003, no. 30).
[292] Guarnieri 2007, 174–175.

polyptych.[293] However, a survey of Paolo's oeuvre reveals intermittent and unsystematic use of chrysography throughout, including in the works that are formally and/or contextually close to the Santa Chiara Polyptych: the Vicenza Polyptych of 1333 and the Pala Feriale of 1345. Even Paolo's final work, the Frick *Coronation* of 1358 shows intermittent use of chrysography. Chrysography is therefore not a reliable indicator for settling matters of chronology. Rather, it was one method of pictorial representation among many used by Paolo and his workshop. Paolo's idiosyncratic use of Byzantine style chrysography did not seem to carry the specific meaning that Folda suggests. The coexistence of different sorts and effects of gilding in the Santa Chiara Polyptych demonstrates the creative latitude of its use in Paolo's workshop. The more limited use of Byzantine style chrysography in Paolo Veneziano's oeuvre, and his repeated emphasis on patterned silks indicate that realism was his primary concern. Most often, Paolo clothed his saints and holy figures in garments that would be recognized by his viewers as contemporary luxury items that carried connotations of wealth and power.

For Paolo's viewers, the reflective patterns would have recalled textiles that were worn by elites in fourteenth-century Italy. Paolo Veneziano's activity began in the concluding decades of a fruitful period of trade between Europe and Asia promoted by the consolidation of the Mongol Empire. By 1260, three generations of conquest that began with Genghis Khan (1167–1227) culminated in the formation of an empire that stretched from the Mediterranean to the East China Sea. The Empire was divided into four khanates – a federation that ensured a stable

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[293] Scholars who favor an early date range include Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting,* Vol. 4, 7; De Marchi, "una proposta per Marco di Paolo Veneziano," 243; Gibbs, "Paolo Veneziano, 29–34; Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano*, 150-153, no. 7. Scholars who favor a later date range include Longhi, *Viatico per cinque secoli della pittura veneziana,* 140; Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento,* 45; Flores d'Arcais "Venezia," 40.

network of trade routes commonly known as the Silk Road.[294] Silk textiles were an important

commodity in this global network.[295]

Lightweight and portable, textiles were an ideal means for transmitting ornamental

motifs, pattern designs, and manufacturing techniques across great distances.[296] Throughout the

Muslim world, textiles were important tools for displaying authority. [297] They were used for

clothing, furnishings, floor coverings, tents, and canopies. Medieval Muslim rulers conferred

honor with gifts of clothing made from valuable silk. These gifts had the potential to impress

competitors, commemorate diplomatic agreements, and reward loyalty. Silks played a similar

role in cementing diplomatic relationships and establishing the magnificence of the Imperial

Court in the Byzantine Empire.[298]

After the consolidation of their empire, Mongol rulers capitalized on the multicultural

legacy of luxury silks by establishing a new system that ensured their control of the material.

Conquered artisans including weavers were forcibly relocated to newly established court centers

to serve the khans.[299] The intermingling of craftsmen from varied regions throughout the

Mongolian empire led to the development of a new textile aesthetic that synthesized the

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[294] Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Mongols and the Northeast Passage," in *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350,* 153–184. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

[295] Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[296] Louise Mackie, "Textile Power, Industry, and Characteristics," 32.

[297] Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," 25–38.

[298] Anna Muthesius, "Silk in the Medieval World," in *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles,* ed. David Jenkins, 326–354 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 326.

[299] Joyce Denney, "Textiles in the Mongol and Yuan Periods," in *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty,* ed. James Watt, 247–248 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010) Exh. cat.

traditions of western Iran, Central Asia, and North and South China.[300] The Mongols' Chinese

predecessors in the Jin and Song dynasty introduced gold brocade patterns of discrete teardrop

motifs, often featuring mythological creatures or animals that were the focus of the nobility's

seasonal hunts (fig. 49).[301] The middle eastern and central Asian traditions favored palmettes and

dense webs of foliate ornament (fig. 50). Another common design in the Chinese context is one

that Anne Wardwell labeled the "tiny pattern style."[302] It features dense repeats of miniscule

animal and foliate motifs. Textiles of this style have been associated with Simone Martini's

representations in the literature.[303]

The textile design trajectory outlined in this chapter can be read in Paolo Veneziano's

oeuvre. In his earliest securely dated work, the three panels of the Vicenza *Dormition of the*

Virgin polyptych of 1333, the Virgin's bier is draped with a textile that has a geometric pattern of

interlocking circles (fig. 11). It is close to the design aesthetic of Byzantine and Spanish silks that

were dominant before the rise of Asian and Middle Eastern imports in the late thirteenth century.

Similar textiles are seen in Giotto's frescoes in San Francesco, Assisi, and the Arena Chapel. In

Paolo's last securely dated work, The Frick Collection's *Coronation of the Virgin,* the phoenixes

and palmettes reflect the Italian silk industry's response to the trade conditions encouraged by

the consolidation of the Mongol Empire (fig. 51). The visual evidence of these two works,

together with the rest of the artist's oeuvre, demonstrates that he was keenly aware of the latest

developments in contemporary textile design.

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[300] Denney, "Textiles in the Mongol and Yuan Periods," 265; see also Mackie, *Symbols of Power,* 213.
[301] Sharon Kinoshita, "Silk in the Age of Marco Polo," in *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns,* ed. Laine Doggett and Daniel O'Sullivan, 141–151 (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 147.
[302] Wardwell, "Stylistic Development of 14th and 15th-Century Italian Silk Design," 186.
[303] Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters,* 73.

Paolo's awareness of the contemporary textile production is also demonstrated in the Santa Chiara Polyptych. The palmette on the Virgin's outer mantle represents Paolo's response to the extensive tradition of Asian and Middle Eastern textile design. The foliate motifs on Christ's blue mantle are closer to the recent Italian production, which tended to be lively and asymmetrical.[304] The Chinese and central Asian traditions were adapted to feature European motifs, such as grape leaves or the cabbage like heads seen on Christ's robe in the Santa Chiara Polyptych.[305] The large blue lotus flowers and the pseudo-script on the cloth of honor suspended behind Christ and the Virgin also represent engagement with silks produced in Asia and north Africa. The large flowers are an inheritance of the early Chinese tradition that preceded the Mongol empire, and the pseudo-script recalls the honorific inscriptions on textiles produced throughout the Muslim world.[306]

The intermingling of cultural traditions in Mongol imperial centers had far-reaching implications that can be read in other examples of Paolo Veneziano's works. When Khubilai Khan (1260–1294) relocated a group of weavers to the imperial capital Daidu (present-day Beijing), he imposed an edict specifying that they would weave cuffs and collars for the imperial court.[307] In surviving representations, these garments are strikingly similar to the silk garments worn by the holy figures in two works by Paolo Veneziano, the Saint Lucy polyptych and the

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[304] Wardwell, "The Stylistic Development of 14th and 15th-Century Italian Silk Design," 207.
[305] Wardwell, "Flight of the Phoenix," 16.
[306] Louise Mackie, "Toward an Understanding of Mamluk Silks: National and International Considerations," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 127–146.
[307] James Wyatt, "A Note on Artistic Exchanges in the Mongol Empire," in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353,* ed. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, 62–74 (New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art), Exh. cat., 70.

Norton Simon Madonna (fig. 52).[308] The red robes worn by Yuan Imperial consorts in late

thirteenth and early fourteenth-century portraits have collars with dark blue textiles that carry

patterns of discrete floral motifs (fig. 53).[309] In the robes worn by Saint Lucy and the Norton

Simon Madonna, the palmettes are not joined by networks of vines as is usually the case in

works by Paolo Veneziano. The more simplified patterns have contributed to some scholars'

emphasis on the workshop status of these objects.[310] The patterns' resemblance to contemporary

silk brocades suggests that for historical audiences, the simplified patterns may not have been an

indication of diminished quality.

Textiles such as those produced in Yuan imperial centers reached Italy through trade

networks. The Persian Ilkhanate, which was established in 1258 when Khubilai Khan's younger

brother Hulegu (d. 1265) overthrew the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, is an especially important

context in these networks for the Italian silk trade. The region had long been home to a

celebrated weaving tradition. The region's mainstay was the Lampas weave, an innovative

technique in which a supplementary weft creates the ornamental pattern.[311] Lampas weaves were

made on drawlooms outfitted with weighted harnesses that carried the extra pattern weft.

Drawlooms had been in use in the region since the Sassanian dynasty (224-651) in late

antiquity.[312]

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[308] See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 111, Muraro classes the work as autograph but notes the prevalence of collaborators; for the Norton Simon panel Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* "Erroneous Attributions and Other Related Works," 140.

[309] Denney, "Textiles in the Mongol and Yuan Periods," 253.

[310] Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana nel Trecento,* 40.

[311] Agnes Geijer, *A History of Textile Art* (New York: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), 99.

[312] Geijer, 99.

Ilkhanid luxury silks were produced in Baghdad, Tabriz, Sultaniyya, Nishapur, Herat, Urgench, Bukhara and Samarkand.[313] Marco Polo's (1254–1324) descriptions of the region's cities create a specialized vocabulary for silks.[314] Baghdad is praised for its cloth-of-gold "called *nasit*," a transcription of the Arabic words for weaving with gold and silk.[315] Marco describes these cloths as "very richly worked with animals and birds."[316] Called *nashishi* in Chinese, the Persian-style cloths-of-gold were made in official workshops and worn by the highest levels of society, as demonstrated in Marco's descriptions of the Great Khan's court.[317] Variations of the term such as *nak, nassic, nacchi,* and *nachiz* appear frequently in thirteenth and fourteenth-century European sources.[318] In his manual for conducting international business, the Florentine banker Francesco Pegolotti emphasizes the tax exemptions that Venetian merchants enjoyed in the trading centers of Constantinople, Laias, and Famagusta.[319]

The city of Laias, or Laiazzo (present-day Yumurtalik, Turkey) was a point of convergence on the Mediterranean for inland trade routes that helped bring textiles like those described by Marco Polo to Europe.[320] Further east along these trade routes, permanent colonies

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[313] Mackie, *Symbols of Power,* 214; the varied textile traditions of the eastern and western Mongolian Empire that were synthesized by artisans working in these centers makes the identification of specific production center difficult.

[314] Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, trans. Sharon Kinoshita (Cambridge: Hackett, 2016), 28. "Iasdi silks, for example, take their name from the city of Yazd, and the cloth-of-gold called "muslin" is named for Mosul.

[315] Marco Polo, *Description of the World,* 20.

[316] Marco Polo, *Description of the World,* 20.

[317] Kinoshita, "Silk in the Age of Marco Polo," 147; two famous passages in the *Description of the World* describe the variously colored silks distributed to officials for annual festivals and the entire court assembly wearing cloth-of-gold in honor of the Great Khan's birthday.

[318] David Jacoby, "Oriental Silks Go West: A Declining Trade in the Later Middle Ages," in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange, and Artistic Transfer,* ed. Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf, 7189 (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 72, 73, 78.

[319] Francesco Badlucci Pegolotti, *La Pratica della Mercatura,* ed. Allan Evans (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1936), 41, 60, 83.

[320] Pegolotti, 16.

of Italian merchants were based at Urgench and Tabriz.[321] Pegolotti's detailed information on the

taxes charged on the Laiazzo route indicate its status as a favored itinerary in the early decades

of the fourteenth century.[322] In 1320 the Venetian Republic sent the ambassador Michele Dolfin

to the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id to seek protections for Venetian merchants, including the right to

worship freely and the assured restitution of a merchant's goods to the consul in the event of his

death.[323] These kinds of protections lasted until the Ilkhan's death in 1335, when the Senate

forbade Venetian merchants from further trade endeavors at Tabriz.[324] Having briefly outlined

the trade networks that brought Asian and Middle Eastern silks to Italian markets, the following

pages will address how this material was perceived in fourteenth-century Italy.

Documents from Paolo Veneziano's lifetime make it possible to characterize the

reception in Italian centers of the patterned silks produced throughout the Mongol Empire. The

Papal Inventories of 1295 and 1311 demonstrate how patterned silk textiles could be used to

portray authority.[325] The inventories describe the contents of the *thesauris sedis apostolice,* the

treasury of the Pope's household. Both inventories contain over two thousand entries, more than

half of which are textiles.[326] Textiles are named in the inventories with geographical descriptors

that demonstrate the papal officials' knowledge of regional styles and techniques. A chapter with

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[321] Jacques Paviot, Les marchands italiens dans l'Iran Mongole, in *L'Iran face à la domination Mongole,* ed. Denise Aigle, 71–86 (Tehran : Institut Francais de Recherche en Iran, 1997).
[322] Pegolotti, 60.
[323] Paviot, "Les marchands italiens dans l'Iran Mongole," 75.
[324] Paviot, 77.
[325] See Christiane Elster, "Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury around the Year 1300: Concepts of Papal Representation in Written and Material Media," in *Inventories of Textiles – Textiles in Inventories: Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture,* ed. Thomas Ertl and Barbara Karl, 25–57 (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2017); and Maureen Miller, "A Descriptive Language of Dominion? Curial Inventories, Clothing, and Papal Monarchy, c. 1300," *Textile History* 48, 2 (2017): 176–191.
[326] Elster, "Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury," 31.

100 entries is devoted to Tartar fabrics in the 1311 inventory.[327] Textiles with this descriptor could be either Middle Eastern, Central Asian, or Chinese. Only one entry in the 1295 inventory involves a more specific notation, namely six black tartar cloths with a golden pattern of flowers, leaves, and beasts. One of these is singled out as Chinese.[328] Other geographical references that appear in the papal inventories include "Panni di Romania [Byzantium]" (Byzantium), "Panni Hispanici [Spanish]," and "Panni Lucani [Lucchese]." The papal officials' awareness of features that distinguished the Chinese textiles, and the range of geographic designations demonstrate that these labels held meaning in the context of the Papal Court. The Muslim and Byzantine legacy of luxurious textiles as a symbol of power continued in this context. The great diversity of textiles contained in his treasury represented the pope's universal authority.[329]

The Dalmatic donated to San Domenico in Perugia by Pope Benedict XI (r. 1303–1304) is an object close to the histories of the Papal Inventories of 1295 and 1311 (fig. 54). After the death of Pope Boniface VIII in 1303 the treasury was transferred to Perugia for the brief Papacy of Benedict XII. The mobile treasury's contents were compiled in 1311 in preparation for a move to Avignon to enrich the court of Clement V(1305–1315). The transfer to Avignon never happened, as the treasury was looted by Uguccione da Faggiuola's (1250–1319) Ghibelline troops in 1312. The dalmatic of Pope Benedict XII is a composite object similar to others described in the inventories that have not survived. The base fabric of the garment is a lampas weave Tartar cloth-of-gold with a pattern of tiny floral motifs. Panels of an Italian blue silk with

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[327] Elster, "Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury," 43.

[328] Elster, "Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury," 43; see also Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici," 134–135; and Lisa Monnas, "L'origine orientale delle stoffe di Cangrande: confronti e problemi," in Marini, ed., 123–39 (see note 332 for full publication). Monnas cautions that this vocabulary may only be a descriptor of color, "cinereo," rather than geographic origin.

[329] Elster, "Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury," 49.

a pattern of gold palmettes are affixed to the back, breast, and sleeves. The various patterns

combined in a single garment creates a heterogeneous aesthetic. The language of the inventories

is externalized in the garment worn by the clergy for the performance of the mass. In the years

leading up to Benedict XI's donation of the garment, Franciscan missionary efforts expanded

upon the church's longstanding claim to universality.[330] Boniface's VIII's *Unam Sanctam* bull

reiterated this claim by emphasizing the church's right to rule also over secular contexts.[331]

Acquiring textiles from across the great range of medieval trade networks, including areas that

were the focus of missionary efforts, was a means to demonstrate these claims.[332]

Composite garments with textiles of varied provenance could represent authority and

prestige also in secular contexts. The burial of Cangrande della Scala (1291–1329), who became

Lord of Verona in 1311, demonstrates how imported silks were central to the final presentation

of a ruler in a context close to Venice.[333] After his successful conquest of Treviso in 1329,

Cangrande succumbed to a mysterious illness that recent analyses confirmed to be death by

poison.[334] The events of Cangrande's death and funeral procession inspired an epic poem in the

Tuscan vernacular; the text of the poem calls attention to Cangrande's bier, "tutta coverta a seta

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[330] See Devin DeWeese, "The Influence of the Mongols on the Religious Consciousness of Thirteenth Century Europe," *Mongolian Studies* 5 (1978-1979): 41–78 and Lauren Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: the Franciscan Mission to China and its Influence on the Art of the West, 1250–1350* (San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999).

[331] Elster, "Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury," 51.

[332] Elster, 51.

[333] See Licisco Magagnato, ed., *Le stoffe di Cangrande: ritrovamenti e ricerche sul 300 veronese* (Florecen: Alinari, 1983), exh. cat. and Paola Marini, ed., *Cangrande della Scala: la morte e il corredo di un principe nel medioevo europeo* (Venice: Marsilio, 2004), exh. cat.

[334] Gino Farnaciari et. al., "A Medieval Case of Digitalis Poisoning: The Sudden Death of Cangrande della Scala, Lord of Verona (1291–1329)," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 54 (2015): 162–167.

[completely covered with silk]."[335] The silk textiles used to present the body of Cangrande survived in his tomb on the façade of Santa Maria Antica, and were discovered when the tomb was opened in 1921 as a part of the celebrations of the sixth centenary of Dante's death. Cangrande was buried in gold and silver patterned red garments that contrasted with fabrics of yellow and blue to represent the heraldic colors of the Comune of Verona and the Scaligeri family.[336] The grave goods also included a silk head covering, red stockings, a silver-striped cushion, and three large rectangular cloths that were likely used to line the casket or cover the catafalque. The grave clothes do not appear to have been worn by Cangrande in life. They were put together hastily after his sudden death, draped over the body in an approximation of princely garments.[337]

In preparing Cangrande for burial, the della Scala family was responding to a local tradition of lavish funerary presentations. The testament of the Papal Legate and art patron Guglielmo di Castelbarco (d. 1320) is evidence of the importance of funerary display in the early fourteenth-century Veneto.[338] Guglielmo specified that 2000 Veronese lire be left for the candles, vestments, and other goods necessary for his funeral. The sum of 2000 lire is remarkable, considering that the construction of Guglielmo's stone tomb on the exterior of Sant' Anastasia cost 1,500 lire.[339] The pioneering textile scholar Giorgio Sangiorgi identified five principal textiles among the remains of Cangrande's burial garments following the 1921 tomb

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[335] Published A. Medin, "La resa di Treviso e la morte di Cangrande I della Scala. Cantare del Secolo XIV" *Archivio Veneto* XXXI (1886): 5–32, 62, 371–422.

[336] Ettore Napione, "Cangrande della Scala, il funerale, le traslazioni, le tombe," in *Marini, ed.,* 23–45, 26. Yellow and blue are the heraldic colors of Verona; silver and red were the heraldic colors of the Scaligeri family.

[337] Paola Frattaroli, "I tessuti di Cangrande: studi e ricerche dal 1921 a oggi," in Marini, ed., 85–103, 91.

[338] Napione, "il funerale, le traslazionei, le tombe," 28.

[339] Napione, 29.

opening.[340] Technical examinations of the textiles in the 1980s revealed that all of the textiles in the tomb were lampas weaves. One of the textiles is a clear example of the Chinese "tiny pattern style." Most support attribution to a central Asian production center or Tabriz.[341] The outer mantle of the ensemble was red with a golden pattern of teardrop-bordered palmettes that are joined by a network of vines (fig. 55). The next layer was a tailored sleeved jacket with a pattern of large golden palmettes on a blue ground, again connected by a network of vines. The innermost layer of clothing, a sleeveless surcoat, was made from Chinese cloth, with a tiny pattern style design similar to the base fabric of the dalmatic of Benedict XII in Perugia. One of the textiles included an ornamental border with Arabic pseudo-script. The visual display must have had a strong visual impact as a juxtaposition of bright colors and intersecting ornamental patterns (fig. 56). The central color scheme confronted the red mantle with the blue sleeved garment, a color combination remarkably close to the clothing worn by Christ and the Virgin in the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

Those who arranged Cangrande's funeral display were making a claim for the della Scala dynasty's place amongst Europe's ruling elite. The aesthetic of heterogeneity that represented universal dominion in the papal court was also the preferred means of self-presentation for a regional dynasty with ties to the Holy Roman Empire. The reconstructed grave goods of King Rudolph I of Bohemia (d. 1307) present a similar ensemble: a semicircular mantle worn over a tailored sleeved jacket and an inner sleeveless surcoat.[342] The textiles were lampas weave silks

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[340] Paola Frattaroli, "I tessuti di Cangrande: studi e richerche dal 1921 a oggi," 87.

[341] See essays by Paolo Frattaroli and Lisa Monnas in Marini, ed. Frattaroli favors attribution to Central Asia, while Monnas emphasizes the possibility of production in Tabriz.

[342] Mechtild Flury-Lemberg, "The grave goods of King Rudolph I of Bohemia and their Relationship to the Funerary Clothing of Cangrande della Scala," in *Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study and Conservation of Medieval Textiles,* ed. Rosalia Varoli-Piazza, 99–105 (Rome: Pandora, 1998).

with golden pattern designs. The exterior mantle had a pattern of dragons; its inner lining featured golden birds. The same fabrics were used for the inner garments, with a tailored jacket made from the bird textiles and a combination of both styles for the sleeveless surcoat.[343] Visual correspondences between the grave clothes of Cangrande and those of Rudolph I point to a network of silk display that stretched across Europe. The burial of Alfonso de la Cerda at the convent of Las Huelgas in Burgos, Spain, is another example. His grave goods included a textile with an identical inscription and striped layout to the textile with Arabic pseudo-script in Cangrande's tomb.[344] Additional examples of how silk textiles featured in contexts where it was important to assert authority include fabrics cited as "nachiz" and "nacchi" in documents associated with the Coronations of Jeanne, Queen of France in 1316 and the English King Edward III in 1350.[345]

The display of actual patterned silk as a means of claiming rulership and or dynasty in a pan-European milieu provides a specific context for the consideration of the fictive silks in Paolo Veneziano's works. In the Santa Chiara Polyptych, Paolo Veneziano represented the triumphal conclusion of the Virgin Mary's story in the visual terms of a ubiquitous aesthetic that displayed the authority of rulers throughout Europe. As established in the previous chapter, the quotations from Bernard of Clairvaux in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* make it possible to characterize, in general terms, how a fourteenth-century Clarissan audience would have related to the figures of Christ and the Virgin in the central panel. Just as the lover and the beloved are united in the Song of Songs, Christ and the Virgin are united as rulers of heaven in images of the Coronation of the Virgin. Attaining unity with Christ in this manner is the ultimate desire of a

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[343] Flury-Lemberg, "Grave Goods of King Rudolph I of Bohemia," 102.
[344] Jacoby, "Oriental Silks Go West, 74.
[345] Jacoby, "Oriental Silks Go West, 74.

devout follower of Franciscan values. But Paolo Veneziano also keyed his imagery to contemporary imagery of rulership. He represented the authority of Christ and the Virgin by clothing them in textiles that were also used to signify the authority of contemporary rulers in both religious and secular contexts. Their ornate clothing would have been recognizable in specific terms to fourteenth-century viewers, especially those associated with a cloistered community that included daughters of Venice's elite families.

Textual sources that document civic life in fourteenth-century Venice give a sense of how the historical viewers of Paolo Veneziano's altarpieces would have come into contact with the luxurious textiles represented in the Santa Chiara Polyptych. Sumptuary laws and descriptions of civic festivals provide insight into the role played by expensive silk textiles in Venetian society. Rather than a moral proscription against luxury, Venetian sumptuary laws were enacted to regulate the economy to promote a healthy society.[346] This was what guided the series of laws enacted one year after the beginning of Paolo's known activity, when five *savi* were appointed to regulate inordinate expenses in 1334.[347] Women's clothing in particular was subject to policing; a fine of 50 libbre was imposed for wearing clothing made or adorned with "nassicio" fabric worked with gold thread.[348] The 1334 sumptuary laws went so far as to declare that burial in anything other than a hair shirt or garment of cheesecloth was forbidden.[349] The 1334 laws were unsuccessful and were repealed within six years. The members of the Maggior Consiglio

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[346] See Giulio Bistort, *Il Magistrato alle Pompe nella Republica di Venezia, Studio Storico* (Venice: Miscellanea di Storia Veneta, 1912); and Mary Newett, "The Sumptuary Laws of Venice in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Historical Essays by Members of the Owens College, Manchester,* ed. Thomas Tout and James Tait, 245–278 (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1907).
[347] Bistort, *Magistrato alle Pompe,* 9.
[348] Bistort, 336–337.
[349] Bistort, 292.

certainly had little desire to curb the economic growth of the silk industry, which was in a state

of expansion at the time thanks to the contributions of the Lucchese émigré weavers.[350] The

Doge and his family were exempt from all sumptuary legislation, as it was their obligation to

embody the magnificence of the Venetian state.[351]

The Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, called simply *La Festa delle Marie* in the

local vernacular, was an important occasion for civic display in fourteenth-century Venice.[352]

Descriptions of this annual festival in Venetian chronicles frequently mention luxury silks. The

official focal point of the festival was a procession that traveled from San Marco to the church of

Santa Maria Formosa. In the procession, two clerics dressed as the Virgin and the Angel Gabriel

were carried through the city on ceremonial thrones. When the chairs reached Santa Maria

Formosa, the clerics recited dialog that enacted the Annunciation.[353] A "ser Paulus, Pinctor,"

who was provided with a year's salary to make these chairs in 1342; was most likely Paolo

Veneziano. The provision of a salary has been interpreted as a sign that he had attained the status

of "pittore di stato."[354] Meanwhile, the popular focal point of the festival was a company of

twelve young women, who according to legend represented a group of young brides saved from

Istrian pirates in the tenth century. Silk clothing and jewels are the most detailed aspect of

Martino da Canale's description of the event in his chronicle, *Les Estoires de Venise.* When a

procession of clergy pass in front of the doge's palace, Martino describes their "pluviali di

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[350] Bistort, 120.
[351] Bistort, 296.
[352] For a description of the festival quoted from Martino da Canal, see Bistort, *Magistrato alle Pompe,* 85–90.
[353] For a similar festival in Padua, see Laura Jacobus, "Flying Pigs, Fiery Whirlwinds, and a 300-Year-Old Virgin: Costume and Continuity in a Sacred Performance," in *The Long Lives of Medieval Art and Architecture,* ed. Jennifer Feltman and Sarah Thompson, 47–62 (Abington: Routledge, 2019).
[354] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 83.

sciamito, tutto ad oro [pluvials of scamite, all gold]."[355] The doge wore gold clothing for the

event,[356] and the twelve young women wore cloth-of-gold covered with jewels and pearls.[357]

Despite the sumptuary laws which sought to limit spending and public display on an

everyday basis, there is plenty of evidence to indicate that there was no aversion to lavish display

under the appropriate circumstances, including the *Festa delle Marie* and other festivals. Another

suggestive episode recorded in Martino's chronicle is a celebration held in honor of the recently

elected doge Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1268, where the Venetian guild members displayed their best

wares.[358] The silk weavers were dressed in cloth-of-gold, with the lower grade workmen in

lighter weight sendals and purple dyed cloths, which were one of the seven fabric types regulated

by the guild.[359] The descriptions of these festivals demonstrate the degree to which luxury

textiles were integrated with the social world of fourteenth-century Venice. The texts are a

reminder that there was ample opportunity for the general population to view luxurious silks.

The detailed representations in Paolo Veneziano's works suggest that he benefited from

some degree of access to silk textiles and their manufacture. There is, in fact, some evidence,

outside the painting of his proximity to the silk trade. A Greek maker of textiles, Antonio called

Paparotolo, was among the witnesses to the sale of property that Paolo had inherited from his

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[355] Bistort, 81.

[356] Bistort, 82, "Sappiate che Monsignor il Doge è vestito ad oro, ed ha corona d'oro in suo capo…" [know that the Doge is dressed in gold, and has (a) crown of gold on his head].

[357] Bistort, 83–4, "Hanno ciascuna corona d'oro in loro teste a pietre preziose, e sono vestite di drappo ad oro, e per tutte loro robbe sono le mosche d'oro e le pietre preziose e le perle oltra numero" [They each have a crown of gold with precious stones on their head, and are dressed in cloth-of-gold, and on all of their robes are specks of gold and precious stones and pearls without number].

[358] Jacoby, David, "Dalla materia prima ai drappi tra Bisanzio, il Levante, e Venezia: la prima fase dell'industria serica veneziana," in *La seta in Italia dal Medioevo al Seicento: dal Baco al drappo,* ed. Luca Molà et. al., 265–304 (Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 2000).

[359] Jacoby, "Dalla materia prima ai drappi," 283.

wife's dowry in 1339.[360] To understand the possible nature of Paolo's interaction with contemporary silk makers and merchants, it is necessary to look to the larger picture.

The Venetian silk industry employed a wide cross-section of Venice's artisan class, with teams of specialized laborers working for consortia of merchants. Just as there were specialized artisans called *battilori* who hammered gold into thin sheets for painters' workshops, *tiraori* specialized in producing the gold threads that were woven into the patterned fabrics.[361] In Italian production contexts these threads were made from gilded strips of animal membrane that were painstakingly wound around a core fiber, usually linen.[362] While painters may not have been directly involved in silk production, there is plenty of evidence to suggest various kinds of indirect involvement. Giotto, for example, owned a loom that he rented out to artisans as a speculative side-venture.[363] Like a wealthy merchant, the successful workshop master applied his capital to a speculative venture in an adjacent discipline.

Another way that a painter might become involved in the silk trade was the production of drawings, but the translation from one medium to another was not simple. While silk design was adjacent to the art of painting, it was a separate discipline that required specialized knowledge of loom technology.[364] The required knowledge was a valuable asset that was carefully guarded. In the 1376 statutes of the Lucchese Merchants' Court, silk designers were among the industry

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[360] Gargan, *Cultura e arte nel Veneto al tempo del Petrarca,* 59–61.

[361] Luca Molà, "The Italian Silk Industry in the Renaissance," in *Le mariegole delle arti dei tessitori di seta: i veluderi (1347–1474) e i samitari (1370–1475),* 52–85 (Venice: Comitato per la pubblicazione delle fonti relative alla storia di Venezia, 2009), 77.

[362] Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici," 1988-89, 96.

[363] Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters,* 41.

[364] Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters,* 42–65; see also Monnas, "The Artists and the Weavers: The Design of Woven Silks in Italy, 1350–1550," *Apollo* 125 (1987): 416–24.

workers forbidden to leave the city to practice their trade elsewhere.[365] Silk merchants forged

contracts with independent designers to ensure proprietary rights over specific designs.[366] Legal

disputes were common when it was found that a designer had worked with multiple merchants

and weavers.[367]

An interaction between the painting and silk trade is well-documented in the case of the

fourteenth-century Lucchese silk designer Benedetto di Giovanni.[368] Over the course of his

career, Benedetto held contracts with a weaver, a painter, and a silk merchant. A 1372 contract

with a weaver stipulated that Benedetto would make twelve pattern designs a year for four years.

The same year, Benedetto made an agreement with the painter Pauluccio Lazzarini. Benedetto

agreed to live and work with the painter for two years, "painting designs for cloths and other

things connected with this [pingendi operas drapporum et alia a predictis dependentibus]."

Benedetto was to receive half the profit generated by his silk designs; at the same time,

Pauluccio was to instruct him in the art of painting. The agreement between the designer and

painter did not last; Benedetto later formed another agreement with a silk merchant that gave him

a salary of 100 florins. Paolo Veneziano's stock repertoire of silk patterns, as seen in the Santa

Chiara Polyptych, could have resulted from an agreement similar to the contract between

Benedetto and Pauluccio. Given Paolo's documented proximity to a cloth maker, it is likely that

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[365] Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters*, 42.
[366] Christine Meek, "Laboreria Sete: Design and Production of Lucchese Silks in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles,* ed. Robin Netherton and Gale Owen-Crocker, 141–168 (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 161.
[367] Meek, "Laboreria Sete," 161.
[368] Information on Benedetto di Giovanni in this paragraph cited from Meek, "Laboreria Sete," 158–159.

he had access to specialists with whom he could have entered into contractual agreements such as those undertaken by Benedetto in Lucca.

Additional evidence for a fourteenth-century painters' engagement with the textile trade is preserved in Jacopo Bellini's (active c. 1424–1470) Louvre sketchbook. Bellini's sketchbook not only contains fourteenth-century drawings of textile designs, it also gives evidence of how a multi-generational workshop gathered and re-used a cache of drawings.[369] The Louvre album was cobbled together from inherited reference materials. This body of information included a number of fourteenth-century drawings on parchment, most of which became the substrata of new drawings that Bellini executed after refreshing the ground of the old drawings with gesso wash. The earlier material incorporated into the Louvre album includes eight pages of textile designs (figs. 57–59).[370] Although it dates to the fifteenth century, the sketchbook contains the best evidence we have of textile designs being incorporated into the resources of a multi-generational workshop like that of Paolo Veneziano.

While Jacopo was undoubtedly recycling the fourteenth-century drawings for the value of their parchment, there is good reason to believe that another type of value was attached to the drawings. Two pages in the Louvre album feature studies of lions that demonstrate how Iacopo Bellini used the historical materials (fig. 57). Jacopo's engagement with the preexisting material

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[369] Robert Scheller, *Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (ca. 900–ca. 1470)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 267–75, cat. no. 25.

[370] Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen, 1300–1450,* vol. 2, Part 1 (Berlin: Mann, 1980), cat. Nos. 652–653. The remaining sheets are in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Harvard Art Museums, and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. See also Howard Coutts et. al., "An Early Italian Textile Drawing in the Victoria and Albert Museum," *The Burlington Magazine* 150 (2008): 389–392; Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters,* 50; and Cecilie Holberg, ed., *Textiles and Wealth in 14th-Century Florence: Wool, Silk, Painting* (Florence: Gallerie dell'Accademia, 2017), 174, cat. No. 29.

was sometimes active, suggesting a desire to learn from its strengths. One of the pages of lion

studies preserves the earlier fourteenth-century drawings untouched. On the other page, the entire

sheet was painted over with a gray gesso ground. Iacopo then drew back over the forms of the

original trecento lions that showed through the gesso wash, thereby adjusting the preexisting

models by adding details in his own style. If the resulting drawings were new, the practice of

recycling older materials and "consuming" the heterogeneous knowledge they recorded was not.

The lion studies that Jacopo used as the foundation for his drawings were themselves a

part of the fourteenth-century tradition of model books featuring animals exemplified by the

Tacuinum associated with Giovannino de' Grassi in Bergamo's Biblioteca Civica.[371] This kind

of reference material was certainly in use when Paolo Veneziano's workshop was in its

ascendance. In fact, the Forzetta' Memorandum of 1335 (the document that constitutes a starting

point for the understanding Paolo Veneziano's aesthetic context) also contains the earliest known

reference to an animal pattern book.[372]

Of the six textile designs gathered in Bellini's Louvre sketchbook, only one example was

not painted over (fig. 58). Consistent with woven silk pattern designs from the second half of the

fourteenth century, the drawing records a complex pattern involving motifs that were also current

in the textiles represented by Paolo Veneziano: palmettes, fantastic Chinese-inspired birds, and

pseudo-script. Together with the overdrawn studies of lions this page is evidence of the variety

of materials representing knowledge from different craft traditions that were assembled in

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[371] Antonio Cadei. "Giovannino de' Grassi nel taccuino di Bergamo," *Critica d'Arte* 17 (1970): 17–36; see also Scheller, *Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission*, 276–291, cat. no. 26.

[372] Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 74 n. 66. The animal pattern book is a part of the material left behind by the late painter Perenzolo. Forzetta mentions "the notebook of Perenzolo, in which he drew all the animals (and all of them beautiful) [et quaternum suum, in quo sun omnia animalia et omia pulchra, facta manu dicti Perenzoli…"

fourteenth-century model books. The many discrete studies present in a model book could be variously applied for naturalistic representations in painting or schematic rendering appropriate for ornamental designs for heraldry, woven textiles, and embroideries.[373]

The examples of Benedetto di Giovanni in Lucca and Jacopo Bellini in Venice suggest two models for how a fourteenth-painter might have interacted with the textile industry, in the first case by supplying reference drawings to weavers, and in the second case by collecting such drawings as part of the body of reference material available in a painter's workshop. Late fourteenth-century guild legislation from Lucca and Florence indicates the specialized knowledge required for designing for a draw loom, and the degree to which designs were zealously guarded by authors and merchants.[374] Yet, over the course of generations, textile designs like those found in the Louvre album passed from this closely guarded context into the stock reference material of an artist's workshop where they intermingled with other kinds of drawings. The notary Oliviero Forzetta ascribed value to animal exemplum books as a form of compensation, and thus indicated the importance of such collections and the knowledge they assembled for both artists and collectors in Paolo Veneziano's context. The pattern designs encountered in the Louvre sketchbook were a relatively stable point of reference. Like the textile designs actually executed by weavers, which had a long staying power due to the slow development of weaving technology,[375] the pattern designs persisted in the artist's workshop as a means to add realistic details to the artist's representations. Their static quality describes fourteenth-century Italian painters' representations of textiles in general. Designs reoccurred in

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[373] Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters,* 51.
[374] Monnas, *Merchants, Princes, and Painters,* 41.
[375] Wardwell, "Stylistic Development of 14th and 15th-Century Italian Silk Design," 217.

various works across an artist's oeuvre, and in the case of Venetian painting, variations of specific motifs continued to be used by successive generations.

Most discussions of Paolo Veneziano focus on the workshop's adaptation of Byzantine pictorial styles and iconographies. The aspects of the artist's works that are designated as "Gothic" have to do with the interplay of manner and naturalism. Aspects such as subtle tonal gradations in the flesh and more detailed folds of drapery are seen as naturalistic tendencies in keeping with the influences of the Gothic era as a prelude to the Renaissance. These generalizations rarely cite the role of the ornamental textile patterns. All at once, this pervasive aspect of Paolo Veneziano's art situates the panels within the socioeconomic context of early to mid-fourteenth century Europe, and the material cultures of Venice more specifically. The patterns are particular enough in their detail to be connected to contemporary textile production and the tradition that informed it. They are representations that are both generalized and exacting, based on a type of luxury object that had a strong visual currency in contemporary society. Like the pattern designs that found their way into Jacopo Bellini's sketchbooks, and those woven on the draw looms themselves, the designs had a strong staying power. Lotus flowers and palmettes persist across the workshop's oeuvre as a means to integrate its production with the circumstances of the international mercantilist society in which they were produced. As much as the textiles represent Venice's mercantilist history, they also respond to a broadly diffused aesthetic tradition in which rulers of the medieval world presented their authority.

The survival of pattern designs among the visual reference materials of Jacopo Bellini's workshop demonstrates that artists cultivated familiarity with textile designs. For the rest of the population, attending a mass on a high feast day could have involved the opportunity to see luxurious silks in the clothing of the priest or adorning the high altar. Those who could afford

them wore them for special occasions such as weddings, and those who couldn't were able to see them at civic festivals. Even if glimpsed only infrequently on special occasions, luxury textiles from far off lands, and their Italian approximations, must have made a significant impression. In instances such as the central scene of the Santa Chiara Polyptych an ephemeral, eye-catching detail from every-day experience was made permanent. A vision of the triumph of Christ and the Virgin is brought down to earth with a detail of local experience. At the same time, it extends this sense of familiarity into the realm of celestial triumph beyond time.

4.   The Santa Chiara Polyptych and Interior Architecture

Since 1951, the Santa Chiara Polyptych has been displayed in the former meeting hall of the Scuola della Carità, one of Venice's five principal confraternities. The imposing space has been used to display works from the permanent collection of the Gallerie dell'Accademia, founded following the Napoleonic suppression of Venice's religious institutions. From 1951 until it was removed for conservation treatment in 2019, the polyptych was displayed against the neutral background of a display mount designed by the modernist architect Carlo Scarpa (1906–1978) (fig. 60). The gilded surfaces of the polyptych's intricately carved frame are a stark contrast to the muted yellow ochre of Scarpa's support. To the right of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, Paolo Veneziano's *Virgin and Child with Two Donors* stands on a support that resembles a painter's easel, also designed by Scarpa. While Carlo Scarpa's display affords the possibility of examining the Santa Chiara Polyptych up close, the chronologically incongruous conceit of the painter's easel calls attention to its limitations. This chapter will restore the Santa Chiara Polyptych to its original display context by considering its frame design and function in relation to those of the choir screens that were once a standard feature of Italian church interiors. By reviewing the reconstructions of lost choir screens, including an example in Bologna that was the original display site for a surviving polyptych by Paolo Veneziano, it will develop a hypothesis about the original display site of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

The Santa Chiara Polyptych is especially noteworthy for the detailed carving of its frame (fig. 4).[376] Spiral columns, triforate arches, friezes of foliate ornament, floral rosettes, aedicules

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[376] Conservation Report, "No. 68, Incoronazione della Vergine,' e ai lati 'Storie della Vita di Cristo," Gallerie dell' Accademia Curatorial Files. In the report, conservator Mauro Pellicioli described the frame as "sebbene rimanneggiata è in gran parte originale."

crowned with fleurons, and a monumental shell lunette frame Paolo Veneziano's painted panels.

These microarchitectural elements help unify the polyptych's narrative scenes and hieratic

figures into a cohesive iconographic program. In the fourteenth century the skill of Venetian

woodcarvers contributed to the city's renown in the field of panel painting.[377] The minutes for a

meeting of the notaries guild of Bologna held in 1384 bear witness to Venice's reputation.[378] The

members of the guild stated their preference for a Venetian artist to supply sacred images for

their headquarters. Local painters were deemed incapable of producing a sufficiently ornamented

altarpiece.[379] An important work by Paolo Veneziano already on display in Bologna likely

contributed to the notaries' regard for Venetian altarpieces. Possibly as early as 1344, a large-

scale altarpiece by the artist was displayed in Bologna's church of San Giacomo Maggiore (fig.

9).[380]

The robust vocabulary of architectural ornament that characterizes the altarpieces

produced by Paolo Veneziano's workshop also sets their imagery in dialog with the surrounding

environment. It is almost as if the polyptych's narrative scenes are viewed through the opening

of a multistoried Gothic loggia. This conceit resonates with the visual experience of fourteenth-

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[377] See Andrea De Marchi, "Polyptyques vénitiens," 12–43; Francesca Flores d'Arcais, "La diffusione delle opere d'arte veneziane nell'area centro adriatico nel Trecento," in *Civiltà urbana e committenze artistiche al tempo del Maestro di Offida,* ed. Silvia Maddalo et. al., 301–17 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italian per il Medio Evo, 2013); and Nathaniel Silver, "Reframing Panel Paintings as Venetian Commodity," 69–85.

[378] See Francesco Filippini and Guido Zucchini, *Miniatori e pittori a Bologna: documenti dei secoli XIII e XIV* (Florence: Sansoni, 1947), 250–251 for the original quotation; for further discussion, see Andrea De Marchi, "una proposta per Marco di Paolo Veneziano," 241.

[379] "…non possit in civitate Bononie per quem sufficientem pinctorem dicte tabule site supra altare et dischum predictos tam preciose et ornative reffici et pingi valeant ut decet mictere teneatur et valet personam cognitam de predictis in civitate Venetiarum ubi dicitur et creditor esse magna ars de talibus tabulis et figuris."

[380] Massimo Medica, "Un secolo d'arte a San Giacomo Maggiore," in *I corali di San Giacomo Maggiore. Miniatori e commitenti a Bologna nel Trecento,* ed. Giancarlo Benevolo and Massimo Medica (Ferrara: Edisai, 2003), 45–48.

century choir screens. Monumental and multi-storied, the many variations of choir screens that were built in Italian churches featured arcaded structures. The spaces within these arcades harbored devotional images displayed on altars. The experience of a choir screen is reduced to a smaller scale in Paolo's designs for objects such as the Santa Chiara Polyptych. Rather than accepting the judgement of scholars like Henk van Os, who characterized the frame of the Santa Chiara Polyptych as a distraction that overshadows the painted scenes,[381] this chapter will consider the carved ornamentation of the Santa Chiara Polyptych as an essential communicative component of the object.

The importance of the setting or framework of small devotional images within church interiors was recognized by Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli. She responded to the Santa Chiara Polyptych from a more sympathetic point of view than Van Os.[382] To account for the polyptych's profusion of small narrative scenes, Schmidt Arcangeli looked to the Byzantine tradition of the iconostasis. She argues that the many images displayed on iconostases were a plausible source of inspiration for the format of Venetian polyptychs. Schmidt Arcangeli's recourse to altar screens as an explanation for the complex format of Venetian altarpieces is a productive point of departure for a renewed consideration of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

As in Byzantine churches, monumental screens separated the space of the high altar in western medieval church interiors.[383] The general format of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, that of a multistoried arcade, is a response to these architectural features. Paolo Veneziano's large-scale

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[381] van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces, 1215–1460*, 75.

[382] Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli, "L'eredità di Costantinoopoli. Appunti per una tipologia delle ancone veneziane nella prima metà del Trecento," in *Il Trecento adriatico*, 97–103.

[383] Donal Cooper, "Recovering The Lost Rood Screens of Medieval and Renaissance Italy," in *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe,* ed. Spike Bucklow et. al., 220–246 (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2017).

polyptychs recreate the form of choir screens in miniature. The deep relief carving of the

microarchitectural frame emphasizes the object's physical presence and underscores the analogy

with interior architecture. While their structure and application varied greatly, the general

function of choir screens was to separate the space of the high altar and the choir area where the

clergy or the members of a monastic community would gather for the mass.[384] Even as they

demarcated boundaries, choir screens were also the focus of attention.[385] Altarpieces were

commissioned for private chapels that were incorporated into the architecture of choir screens

and prominent images were displayed above them, including large-scale gabled panels and the

crucifixes mentioned above.[386] Two of these crucifixes by Paolo Veneziano survive, and panels

in the collection of the Museo Correr are evidence of an additional example that has not survived

intact.[387] Displaying the image of Christ above the choir screen focused the congregation's

attention on the area of the high altar and emphasized the sacrifice commemorated with the

Eucharist. This emphasis was commonly reinforced with an altar dedicated to the True Cross

located in a prominent position on the choir screen.[388] These structures also played an important

role in church services as platforms for liturgical readings and sacred dramas.[389]

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[384] See Marcia Hall, "The Italian Rood Screen: Some Implications for Liturgy and Function," in *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore,* ed. Sergio Bertelli, 213–218 (Florence: Nuova Italia Editrice, 1978).

[385] Jacqueline Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, ca. 1200–1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[386] See Cristina Guarnieri, "Una madonna dell'umiltà 'de panno lineo' di Lorenzo Veneziano," *Nuovi Studi* 3 (1998): 15–24 for an important example of a votive image commissioned for this context. A painted framework of Gothic architecture presents the Madonna of Humility. Cangrande della Scala and his wife, Elizabeth of Bavaria, kneel at the feet of the Virgin and Child.

[387] Guarnieri, "Per la restituzione di due croci perdute di Paolo Venezano," 133–58.

[388] Giovanna Valenzano, "La suddivisione dello spazio nelle chiese mendicanti: sulle tracce dei tramezzi delle Venezie," in *Arredi liturgici e architettura,* ed. Arturo Quintavalle, 99–114 (Milan: Electa, 2003), 99.

[389] Cooper, "Recovering the Lost Rood Screens of Medieval and Renaissance Italy," 222

The rise of the mendicant orders was a catalyst for the construction of choir screens in Italy.[390] A fourteenth-century chronicle of the church of Sant' Eustorgio in Milan describes how in 1239, the Dominicans altered the Romanesque basilica by adding a choir enclosure to the space.[391] As the church of a Clarissan community, the convent of Santa Chiara in Venice surely included a choir screen in Paolo Veneziano's time. Saint Clare's own rule called for strict claustration of the sort facilitated by a choir screen. Clare's rule conformed with the dominant practice for professed religious women during the period. [392]

Unfortunately nothing remains of the fourteenth-century church of Santa Chiara. It was lost to a fire in 1572; a new church was built and consecrated in 1620.[393] The new church was converted to a military hospital following the Napoleonic suppression in 1807.[394] What little remained of the complex did not survive the area's conversion into the Piazzale Roma transportation hub in the twentieth century.[395] A note added to an inventory following the fire of 1572 indicates that a structure separating the space of the high altar was maintained in the new church.[396] While it is not possible to give a precise account of the fourteenth-century architecture

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[390] Cooper, 229.

[391] Cooper, 229.

[392] See chapter two of Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy*, "Within the Walls," 34–64.

[393] Umberto Franzoi and Dina di Stefano, *Le chiese di Venezia* (Venice: Fantonigrafica, 1976), 87–88.

[394] Franzoi and di Stefano, *Chiese di Venezia,* 88.

[395] Franzoi and di Stefano, 88.

[396] Andrea Bonaldi, *Catastico,* Convent of Santa Chiara, 1564, Venice, Archivio di Stato, Convento di Santa Chiara, Pergamene, 1. In gratitude for a healing vision of Saints Cosmas and Damian that an elderly nun reported seeing from her deathbed, the community petitioned the patriarch of Venice for permission to celebrate a double office in their honor: "Per questa gratia cosi singolare, tutte le Monache all'hora hanno, et noi tutte, che si troviamo al presente habbiamo tanta devotione in questi Benedetti santi, che gli habbiamo erretto un'Altare nelle nostra Chiesa interiore, con proposito quando si finirà la chiesa esteriore di farne uno di fuori più adorno che sarà à noi possibile a noi dedicato […] [for this especially singular grace, all of the present Clarissans have, and all of us, who are found at present, have much devotion to these blessed

of Santa Chiara, consideration of other examples enables a generalized reconstruction of the church's interior, including its choir screen.

The form of choir screens varied greatly from region to region. Historical documents attest to the wide range of designs and functions associated with the structures, which are reflected in the names given to them.[397] The screen in the lower church of San Francesco at Assisi was called a *pulpitum,* indicating that the structure involved a designated space for liturgical readings. This function is also emphasized in the traditional German designation of the structures as *lettner*. Narrowing consideration only to the Italian context, we find several terms from local vernaculars used to describe the structures. "Ponte," or "pontili" were common variations that emphasized their commanding physical presence. With a series of vaulted archways, some Italian choir screens resembled the stone bridges that were a defining feature of Italian cityscapes. The simpler designation as "muri" or "muriccioli" reiterates the sense of imposing physicality. The use of the term "corridoi" to describe the choir screen of San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna refers to a particular aspect of the architecture. It calls attention to the arcaded gallery that contained private chapels.[398] In the Venetian context, where church screens were often large wooden structures, they were called "barchi" for the carpentry's resemblance to

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saints, to whom we have erected an altar in our interior church, with the intention that when the exterior church is finished, one will be dedicated {an altar}, ornamented to the extent possible for us]."

[397] For the discussion of terms summarized in this paragraph, see Donal Cooper, "Recovering the Lost Rood Screens of Medieval and Renaissance Italy," 222–23.

[398] Fabio Massaccessi, "Il 'corridore' della chiesa agostiniana di San Giacomo Maggiore a Bologna: prime ipotesi ricostruttive," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (2014): 1–26, see especially page 21.

the techniques of shipbuilding.[399] The most common term in the Italian tradition is "tramezzo," a vernacular adaptation of the Latin term intermedio.

A pictorial representation by Giotto and his workshop in the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi gives a sense of how choir screens were construed by a fourteenth-century artist as structures that marked boundaries and focused the laity's attention. In the fresco cycle in the Upper Church, one scene includes a representation of laypeople and a Franciscan community experiencing a choir screen (fig. 61). The scene records Sir John of Greccio's miraculous vision of Francis holding a living Christ Child during a reenactment of the Nativity. Contrary to Bonaventure's account of a vision that takes place in a forest, the scene in the Assisi fresco unfolds within a contemporary church interior.[400] The perspectival arrangement of the scene implies a viewer who is standing slightly behind the altar to witness the vision that takes place next to it. The choir screen, seen from behind, bisects the lower half of the composition, forming the backdrop of the scene. It is a white stone wall ornamented with a classicizing dentate cornice and rectangular recesses. In the upper half of the composition an undefined expanse of blue suggests the vast space of the nave beyond. A wooden crucifix seen from behind presides over the center of the screen. Alongside saint Francis and the clergy who officiate the mass, the Franciscan friars are joined within the high altar precinct by a group of laymen.

The social function of choir screens is represented in the Assisi fresco by the division of the sexes. Laywomen are depicted standing in the central doorway to watch the scene from the nave (beyond the *tramezzo* enclosure). The women's presence outside the screened area conforms with the situation described in Durandus's writings on late thirteenth-century church

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[399] Paola Modesti, "I cori nelle chiese veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581. Il 'barco' di Santa Maria della Carità," *Arte Veneta* 59 (2002): 39–65.
[400] Mulvaney, "The Beholder as Witness: the Crib at Greccio," 25.

ritual.[401] According to Durandus, the clergy occupied the area closest to the high altar and members of the monastic community attended mass in the choir, which was situated either in front of or behind the altar. Laymen could be given access to spaces beyond the choir screen during the mass.[402] Women and the unbaptized were restricted to the nave in front of the choir screen. While the hierarchies seen in the fresco seem to confirm Durandus's account as normative, recent research shows a greater degree of variation in practice. Study of notarial documents shows that laypeople were in fact sometimes allowed to enter areas traditionally regarded as accessible only to the members of a monastic community.[403] Men and women are cited as being present for the signing of agreements in chapter houses, sacristies, and choir precincts. The restrictions were likely imposed for the celebration of the mass, with access granted for select groups at other times.

Even though they demarcated boundaries, choir screens were permeable structures. In the Assisi fresco, the central aperture of the imposing stone screen is in harmony with the decorative scheme of the five ornamental recesses. The representation calls attention to another important aspect of choir screens. While it establishes the barrier that restricted access to the high altar precinct, it also contains the aperture that focuses their attention on the miracle taking place next to the high altar. Even as they limited access, choir screens were structural tools for guiding the viewing experience of lay populations. The legend of the knight's miraculous vision is brought

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[401] Mulvaney, "The Beholder as Witness: the Crib at Greccio," 25.

[402] Mulvaney, 25; see also Cooper, "Recovering the Lost Rood Screens," 235, for discussion of a possible tripartite division involving the area in front of the tramezzo, an intermediary zone beyond the tramezzo, and finally, an inner choir enclosure Cooper notes scholars' hypothesis that laymen may have been admitted only to the intermediary zone between the choir screen and the inner choir enclosure.

[403] Donal Cooper, "Access All Areas? Spatial Divides in the Mendicant Churches of Late Medieval Tuscany," in *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages,* ed. Frances Andrews, 90–107 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2011).

into the physical space of the high altar precinct, simultaneously emphasizing the association of

Francis with the body of Christ, and in turn, Christ's body with the Eucharist. By placing the

Franciscan legend of a miraculous vision in a contemporary church interior, the artist of the

fresco demonstrated how the core rituals of the mass were experienced across boundaries and

dramatized by structures that focused the laity's attention.

Due to the scant number of surviving examples, knowledge of choir screens in the Italian

context remains limited. Counter-Reformation ideals and changing aesthetic tastes that favored a

unified church interior contributed to the removal of most Italian choir screens.[404] None survive

in the Veneto region.[405] Marcia Hall's scholarship reintroduced the choir screen as an important

feature of fourteenth-century Italian church interiors.[406] She recognized that an architectural

drawing for the Baroncelli family's private chapel in the Franciscan church of Santa Croce in

Florence corresponded with measurements taken from the foundation of the vast tramezzo that

once stretched across the nave.[407] In Hall's reconstruction (fig. 62), the Baroncelli chapel

drawing is a modular unit that was repeated across the span of the tramezzo in six of the

structure's nine bays.

The Baroncelli presentation drawing features a refined Gothic architectural vocabulary. A

sharply gabled triforate arch perched between delicate finials rests on spiral columns. Repeated

across the nave of the church, the module presented in the Baroncelli drawing would have had a

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[404] Marcia Hall, "The Ponte in S. Maria Novella: The Problem of the Rood Screen in Italy,"
Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes (1974): 157–173, 158; see also Cooper,
"Recovering the Lost Rood Screens of Medieval and Renaissance Italy," 244.
[405] Valenzano, "La suddivisione dello spazio nelle chiese mendicanti," 99.
[406] See Marcia Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconstructed," *The Art Bulletin*
56 (1974): 325–341; Hall, "The Italian Rood Screen: Some Implications for Liturgy and
Function," 213–218; and Hall, "The Tramezzo in the Italian Renaissance, Revisited," in
Thresholds of the Sacred, 215–232.
[407] Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce," 327.

commanding presence. The tops of the gables and pinnacles reached a height of fifty feet, and the upper gallery was wide enough to accommodate liturgical readings and *sacre rappresentazioni*. Documentary evidence dates the presentation drawing to 1332; work on the Baroncelli family's chapel proceeded from that date until 1338.[408] The reconstruction of the *tramezzo* of Santa Croce is therefore an important example from a Franciscan church contemporary to the years of Paolo Veneziano's artistic maturity. It was a monumental structure in a refined Gothic style, with a lower level that contained a loggia of private chapels. An arcade of delicate Gothic arches and finials was positioned above. The tramezzo of Santa Croce in Florence represents the upper echelon of fourteenth-century choir screen construction. Hall's reconstruction effectively illustrates the screen's importance as a dominant feature in the interior of Santa Croce in the fourteenth century.

The convent of Santa Chiara had a less commanding presence in Venice's urban fabric than Santa Croce had in Florence. As the institution had benefitted from the support of Venice's elites since its founding, the possibility that its interior furnishings were similarly elaborate, albeit on a smaller scale, cannot be excluded. The general body of knowledge available for the reconstruction of fourteenth-century Italian choir screens provides a basis for envisioning the choir screen that once stood in the convent church of Santa Chiara. A mid-fourteenth-century drawing attributed to Fra Giovanni da Pistoia shows the floor plan for a *tramezzo* in the single nave mendicant church of San Francesco in Arezzo,[409] in a situation that is architecturally comparable to that of the lost convent of Santa Chiara. Jacopo de' Barbari's aerial woodcut of Venice, which was published in 1500 before the fire that destroyed the convent, shows the

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[408] Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce," 334.
[409] Cooper, "Recovering the Lost Rood Screens of Medieval and Renaissance Italy," 232.

convent church as a single nave structure (fig. 64). The simple arrangement recorded in the Fra

Giovanni drawing was widely diffuse in the Franciscan sphere of influence.[410] The drawing

shows a stone wall bisecting the nave, demarcating a sizeable choir enclosure where the

community of friars could gather before the high altar. An opening in the middle of the wall

created a sight line that led to the high altar from the nave. Most importantly for a hypothesis

concerning the original location of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, the drawing shows two altars

positioned on either side of the choir screen opening, on the lay side of the wall.

A more complex choir screen has been reconstructed for the Augustinian church of San

Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna, a site that once featured an altarpiece by Paolo Veneziano. In

Fabio Massacessi's reconstruction (fig. 63), the choir screen of San Giacomo Maggiore had two

levels like the monumental screen in Santa Croce in Florence (fig. 62).[411] The lower level

featured an arcaded gallery with five arches. Two altars were positioned within arches on either

side of the central opening that led to the high altar.[412] The upper level likely held a

corresponding number of altars arranged on either side of the central crucifix. Paolo Veneziano's

San Giacomo Maggiore polyptych can still be found in the church for which it was

commissioned, but it is now displayed in the ambulatory, where it was placed following a mid-

twentieth-century conservation treatment.[413] This restoration campaign returned the San

Giacomo Maggiore polyptych to its original appearance (fig. 9).

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[410] Archaeological excavations of Franciscan churches in the Greek Peloponnese and Kotor in Macedonia have revealed that these churches closely followed the Giovanni da Pistoia plan. Cooper, 232.

[411] Massaccesi, "Il 'corridore' della chiesa agostiniana di San Giacomo Maggiore a Bologna," 1–26.

[412] Four chapels are documented as having been commissioned for the choir screen. Two of these chapels were on the platform on top of the screen, and two were in the arcaded gallery below.

[413] Massimo Medica, "Un secolo d'arte a San Giacomo Maggiore," 45; for catalog entries, see Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia,* 101–2 and Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* no. 21.

Commissioned as early as 1344, the polyptych was a rare example of an altarpiece cum reliquary. A relic of the True Cross was enshrined in the central panel within a crucifix carved in relief that was lost in the nineteenth century. Paolo Veneziano's polyptych involves an intricate architectural façade with triforate arches and columns lined with foliate ornament that contain a series of eighteen saints. Below the central panel, three narrative scenes show miraculous healings by the Augustinian saint, Nicholas of Tolentino. The four saints closest to the central reliquary, John the Evangelist, Peter, Paul, and James were commemorated in the dedication of other altars in the choir screen.[414] There is good reason to think that Paolo's polyptych was associated with one of the choir screen altars. Following an expansion of the church that was completed in 1315, lay patrons began to make contributions for altar dedications in the chapels. A 1368 commission for the crucifix suggests that the choir screen was complete by that date. The altar on the lower level to the left of the central aperture was dedicated to the Holy Cross. Its dedication makes it a likely candidate as the original location of Paolo Veneziano's polyptych.

With the display of a relic at its center, and a selection of saints that referred to the devotional activities conducted in the surrounding architectural structure of the choir screen, the San Giacomo Maggiore polyptych repeats the layout of the choir screen on a small scale. In so doing it restages the experience of viewing the altar through the central aperture of the choir screen. The polyptych was originally displayed immediately to the left of the central aperture that contained the sight line to the church's high altar. The ornate carving of the framing elements affixed to the surface of the painted panels creates a sense of physical presence for the represented saints. A large shell lunette underscores the importance of the central panel. Smaller versions of the motif do the same for the half-length saints in the upper register. The recessed

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[414] Massacesi, "Il 'corridore' della chiesa agostiniana di San Giacomo Maggiore," 24.

entablature of quatrefoils above the central register of full-length saints further emphasizes the sense of recession into space. The half-length saints in the upper register, and the small scenes that communicate the defining attributes of Saints Martin and George are viewed through apertures of Gothic architecture. Groupings of spiral columns reinforce the sense of spatial depth. Lancet windows painted onto the surface of the pilasters that separate the small half-length saints in the lowest register are a further evocation of a porous architectural structure.

While it is not possible to know the precise original display site of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, the circumstances and microarchitecture of the altarpiece that Paolo Veneziano created for San Giacomo Maggiore can serve as the basis for speculation. Like Marcia Hall's reconstruction of the choir screen at Santa Croce, Massacessi's reconstruction of the structure at San Giacomo Maggiore features an arcade of Gothic arches. In his design of the San Giacomo Maggiore polyptych, Paolo Veneziano responded to the architectural setting of a Gothic arcade. His altarpiece is in effect a Gothic arcade in miniature that relates the polyptych's subject matter to its surroundings. It seems likely, therefore, that the Santa Chiara triptych, with its Gothic arcades, likewise responded to its architectural surroundings in the Church of Santa Chiara.

To reconstruct the appearance of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's original display site, in a Venetian church, I turn again to a pictorial representation, Vittore Carpaccio's *Vision of Prior Ottobon*. This painting features the Venetian variant of the choir screen – the large wooden structure commonly called a *barco* (fig. 65).[415] Like the Assisi fresco, Carpaccio's painting records a miraculous vision. In response to his prayers during an outbreak of plague in 1511, the

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[415] Modesti, "I cori nelle chiese veneziane," 47. See the paragraph on page 116 on vernacular terms of choir screens. "Barco" was common in the Venetian context, where choir screens often involved wooden structures. They were called "barchi" for the carpentry's resemblance to shipbuilding techniques.

prior of the Venetian monastery of Sant' Antonio di Castello witnessed a miraculous vision of

the ten thousand martyrs of Mount Ararat processing through the interior of his church. The

martyrs' procession continues beyond the frame of the composition at the left, passing through a

portal just beyond view. The barco represented by Carpaccio is a heavy wooden structure

supported by thin stone columns. Half of an elaborate Gothic aedicule is visible on top of the

structure at the extreme left of the composition. The aedicule is an effective means to call

attention to the crucifix, mentioned in a 1369 inventory, displayed at the center of the choir

screen.[416] The altar positioned in front of the barco, where the prior was interrupted by the

miraculous vision, recalls the "chiesa interiore" and "exteriore" cited in a later Santa Chiara

inventory.[417] The ensemble of the cross and aedicule signals the presence of the central portal

below that afforded access to the high altar. Carpaccio's painting dates to 1512; records from

1504 describe a barco in need of repair.[418] Carpaccio's representation indicates that a Gothic

idiom of architectural ornament persisted as the preferred style for dividing structures in

Venetian church interiors.

Certain details in the painting give a sense of the experience of Venetian choir screens. A

white-robed monk kneels at the enclosure that demarcates one of the two altars visible beneath

the choir screen. The bottom edge of the wooden structure is hung with a row of humble ex-voto

offerings, a reminder of how the screens were the focus of devotional attention unto themselves.

In addition to the wealthy who could afford to commission the private chapels that stood in their

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[416] Nathaniel Silver, "'Cum Signo T Quod Potentiam Vocant,': The Art and Architecture of the Antonite Hospitallers in Trecento Venice," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 58 (2016): 27–57, 42.

[417] See note 394 on page 116 for the vocabulary in a later inventory that describes the interior space of the convent church of Santa Chiara.

[418] Silver, "Antonite Hospitallers," 41.

arcades, larger groups from the laity including tertiaries and confraternity members had the opportunity to interact with these structures, as attested by the collection of devotional offerings that Carpaccio represented.

Carpaccio's choir screen has many elements that recall those of the Santa Chiara Polyptych. The structure positioned on top of the stone columns and balustrades in Carpaccio's painting involves an intricate architecture of gilded wood. It is an assembly of varied architectural niches, arranged in an ascending order. The lowest register of niches rest on corbels and feature shell lunettes. The second register has rounded arches, superseded by the topmost register which contains triforate arches. Ascending upwards from the slender columns that support it, the barco filters the viewer's apprehension of the chiesa interiore through an arcade of myriad implied apertures. The aedicule on top of the structure encourages affective devotion, hosting an image of Christ's crucified body and serving as a reminder of the Eucharist celebrated on the high altar behind the screen. The wall of ornamental niches simultaneously evokes permeability and suggests sacred presence. At the level of function the intermarriage of division and access effected by the choir screen, might also be ascribed by the framework of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

The representations of choir screens by Giotto and Carpaccio give a sense of how these structures governed the experience of church interiors. Giotto's fresco emphasizes the choir screen's role as a mediator between the laity and the cloistered community. The choir screen's role of mediation potentially accounts for the Santa Chiara Polyptych's original display site. Given that the donor figure kneeling at Saint Francis's funeral bier is clothed like a laywoman, it is likely that the polyptych was displayed on an altar supported by private patronage on the lay side of a choir screen. By evoking the architecture of choir screens on a small scale, the

polyptych's framing devices emphasize the object's role as a point of contact between the lay population and the Clarissan community.

The polyptych's functional relationship to the choir screen is, in fact, thematized in its upper register, with the scene of Saint Clare taking the veil (fig. 37). The scene shows Clare, after donning the striped mantle that represented her order to the world, walking forwards, entering the darkened portal of a church interior. It is a scene of passage from one way of life to another. For viewers of the altarpiece, it stages the sacrifice necessary to begin a mendicant vocation. It is not, however, the scene alone that encourages identification with the saintly model. The framework does a great deal of the work. When it is viewed through a physically present archway of the frame, the analogy between the space of Saint Clare and the viewer's space is reinforced. The polyptych would have originally been viewed in an environment where a significant architectural structure mediated the experience of the church interior and the relationship to the institution, both for members of the cloistered community and the laity. This experience of mediation via a physically present architecture is repeated throughout the polyptych by the frames that enclose each of the painted representations. The altarpiece's relationship to the tradition of choir screens helps us understand how the ornament of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's frame served an important communicative function.

Before leaving this question behind, it must be said that the communicative potential of Venetian altarpiece frames was the result of collaboration between painters like Paolo Veneziano and specialist woodcarvers. The ornate frames of Paolo Veneziano's altarpieces are some of the earliest examples of a tradition of Venetian craftsmanship that would continue to flourish in the

fifteenth century.[419] Master woodcarvers presided over their own workshops and were

commissioned by painters for contributions to altarpieces such as the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

Later generations of Venetian painters including Michele Giambono (c. 1400–1462), Antonio

Vivarini (ca. 1415–1476), and Giovanni d'Alemagna (d. 1450) contracted with the same

woodcarver for repeated commissions.[420] *Intaiadori* were the carvers of fine ornament, while

marangoni were skilled in the structural techniques of house carpentry. Both specialties might be

involved in an altarpiece, depending on the nature of the commission. The frame of Lorenzo

Veneziano's monumental Lion polyptych of 1357, for example, includes a signature inscription

that credits the frame to a certain Zanino, referred to as a "sculptor" in the inscription.[421] Anne

Markham Schulz identifies this woodcarver as the intaiador Zanino de Cavo.[422] Nathaniel Silver

notes that the prior of the church where Lorenzo's altarpiece was originally displayed owed a

debt to the family of "Zanini di Vigna marangon," and posits him as another candidate for the

woodcarver identified in the inscription.[423] The latter carpenter was hired by the city to design

and build the new Rialto Bridge in 1363. Silver views the prior's debt as circumstantial evidence

that the bridge builder may have been involved in the construction of the altarpiece. He sees the

robust structure of the altarpiece's frame as justification for this hypothesis. The respective skills

of the intaiador and marangon reflected in these two scholars' identifications of the individual in

the inscription attest to the range and versatility of the practice of woodcarving in fourteenth-

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[419] Anne Markham Schulz, "La scultura lignea in area lagunare dalla metà del Trecento alla metà del Cinquecento," in *Con il legno e con l'oro. La Venezia artigiana degli intagliatori, battiloro e doratori,* ed. Giovanni Canniato, 45–65 (Sommacampagna: Cierre, 2009).

[420] Schulz, "La scultura lignea in area lagunare," 47–8.

[421] See Cristina Guarnieri, *Lorenzo Veneziano* (Milan: Silvana, 2006), 181, "MCCCLVII / HEC TABELLA / F[A]C[T]A FUIT ET HIC / AFFISSA P[E]R / LAURE[N]CIUM / PICTOREM / ET CANINUM SC/ULTOREM…"

[422] Schulz, *Woodcarving and Woodcarvers in Venice, 1300–1550,* 122f.

[423] Silver, "Antonite Hospitallers," 34.

century Venice. During this period, the activities of both specialists would have been represented by a single guild, which bore the name of the marangoni.[424]

Variations in construction technique distinguish Venetian altarpieces from their central Italian counterparts. Engaged frames that were integrated with the picture plane before the painter began work are the hallmark of central Italian workshops. For Venetian painters, the framing elements were prepared separately and then applied to the surface of the painted panels. In Tuscan polyptychs, the predella and side pilasters created a structure that offered support and containment.[425] The Venetian approach to altarpiece construction offered greater flexibility for the panels to expand and contract in response to the area's damp climate.[426] The framing elements have been described as a sort of scaffolding that holds the painted panels together, but with a less restrictive containment structure than the pilasters and predella of a central Italian polyptych.[427]

Removing the triforate arches from the panels with the pairs of Christological scenes in the Santa Chiara Polyptych shows an expanse of gesso between the two scenes (fig. 66). As it would later be hidden by the frame, this area was available to the painter for creative exploration. In the Santa Chiara Polyptych, the area between the Last Supper and the Betrayal shows a handprint left by a member of the fourteenth-century workshop. Nearby is a carefully executed

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[424] Giovanni Caniato, "Intagliatori, doratori e battiloro a Venezia dal tardo medioevo ai giorni nostri," in *Con il legno e con l'oro. La Venezia artigiana degli intagliatori, battiloro e doratori,* ed. Giovanni Canniato, 11–44 (Sommacampagna: Cierre, 2009).

[425] Christa Gardner von Teuffel, "From Polyptych to Pala: Some Structural Considerations," in *La pittura nel XIV e XV secolo. Il contributo dell' analisi tecnica alla storia dell'arte,* ed. Henk van Os et. al., 323–344 (Bologna: Editrice CLUEB, 1983).

[426] See Valenti, "Alle origini del polittico veneziano," 27 and Elisabeth Ravaud, "Contribution des examens radiographiques à la reconstitution de retables vénitiens du XIVe siècle," in *Autour de Lorenzo Veneziano,* 45–55.

[427] Valenti, "Alle origini del polittico veneziano," 27.

preparatory drawing for one of the camels in the Nativity scene. Other examples of Paolo

Veneziano's works show palettes and test swatches in the area that would eventually be covered

by the frame.[428] Most important for consideration of the frame's relationship to the polyptych's

devotional content is the fact that the Venetian tradition of altarpiece construction afforded

creative agency to the woodcarvers.[429] With the painted scenes realized before the frames were

added, the woodcarvers were able to develop designs that responded to and enhanced the

represented material (fig. 4).

The results of a collaborative relationship between figural representation and ornament,

between the work of the painter and that of the woodworker, are on full display in the Santa

Chiara Polyptych. The central subject of the altarpiece is the life of Christ. The Virgin plays a

prominent role in this narrative. She joins Christ at the conclusion of the narrative in the central

panel, where she is crowned as the triumphal Queen of Heaven and Bride of Christ. In the upper

register of the polyptych, four scenes show episodes from the lives of the Franciscan Order's

founding saints, Francis and Clare. These episodes from recent history are placed between two

epochal moments in Christian history: Pentecost and the Last Judgment. The scenes of the upper

register are interspersed with four small images of the Four Evangelists that ground the

altarpiece's content in the foundational gospel narratives. Finally, two outward facing images of

the prophets David and Isaiah relate the missing pediment complex to the rest of the polyptych.

This area may have contained three compartments; a potential subject would be Christ as Man of

Sorrows positioned between a split image of the Annunciation, as was discussed in the second

chapter of this dissertation.

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[428] Elisabeth Martin et. al., "Découverte d'une ancienne palette: Paolo Veneziano, *La Vierge à l'Enfant*," *Techne* 7 (1998): 89–92.
[429] Silver, "Reframing Panel Paintings as Venetian Commodity," 74.

The polyptych's devotional content is mediated and organized by the finely carved framing elements (fig. 4). The frame gathers the various narrative episodes and occasional hieratic representations into a coherent whole. They demarcate the three related but distinct iconographic zones that feed into the central panel's triumphal resolution. The microarchitectural elements are carved in deep relief and gilded to simulate the appearance of metalwork.[430] The polyptych is actually composed of seven panels (fig. 67). The Christological scenes are divided across four horizontal panels, each containing two scenes. The Franciscan scenes and the Evangelists are divided into two groups of three, arranged on two long horizontal panels. The prophets occupy their own small panels, which brings into question whether their current placement reflects their original position.[431] The Coronation of the Virgin was painted on a single vertically oriented panel. The polyptych's three iconographic components – Franciscan history, the Life of Christ, and the perpetual adoration that follows the Assumption of Christ and the Virgin – lay out a hierarchy of meaning. This hierarchy is reinforced by the ornamental frames.

The Franciscan scenes take place within sharply gabled aedicules that are supported by groupings of spiral columns. The curved fleurons that emanate from the top of the gables and the vegetal finials are original to the polyptych.[432] The Four Evangelists establish the authority of the Gospels. They relate the example of Christ's life to the deeds of Francis and Clare. Similarly, the prophets David and Isaiah construe the polyptych's narratives from the New Testament and

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[430] While the carving of the frame is for the most part original, ongoing conservation efforts have confirmed that the present gilding is the result of a nineteenth-century restoration.
[431] If the left to right order of these figures were to be reversed, with both of the prophets facing inwards towards the missing central panel, the iconographic meaning would not be affected.
[432] The fleurons above the scenes of Saint Clare and Francis's renunciation are restored, as is the left finial above the stigmata scene.

recent history as a fulfillment of the Hebrew scripture's prophecies. This ancillary function is reinforced by the common design shared by the smaller, simpler aedicules that contain the Prophets and Evangelists.

The journey through the hierarchy of the altarpiece's devotional content continues below with the eight scenes from the Life of Christ. The transition from the thirteenth-century lives of the order's founder to the central narrative of the New Testament is reinforced by a continuous frieze of foliate ornament. The frieze of alternating acanthus leaves and cabbage motifs that echo the finials at the top of the altarpiece surrounds the complex of eight Christological scenes and the central coronation panel. It accommodates the pedimented structure created by the larger, vertically oriented central panel and follows the curve of the shell lunette that crowns the central panel.

Considered as a whole, the microarchitecture of the Santa Chiara Polyptych may be the best evidence we have of the appearance of the choir screen of Santa Chiara. Frescoed friezes of foliate ornament, of the sort found in the Santa Chiara Polyptych were a common feature of mendicant church interiors in the Veneto. As has been argued for other sites in the Veneto, the choir screens were often integrated with church interiors by means of ornamental borders.[433] Andrea De Marchi details how the painted frieze in the church of San Fermo in Verona visually integrated the lost choir screen with the rest of the church's interior.[434] He even attributes part of the painted ornamental frieze, which survives only in fragments, to Paolo Veneziano.[435]

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[433] De Marchi, "Due fregi misconosciuti e il problema del tramezzo in San Fermo Maggiore a Verona," 129–142.
[434] De Marchi, 129.
[435] De Marchi, 129, 131.

In the lower portion of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, all of the painted scenes are viewed through expanded triforate archways. With the Christological scenes, tripartite spiral columns emphasize the sense of depth that the frame creates. Round floral rosettes, a common motif from contemporary architecture, adorn the pendentives between the arches. A simple frieze of foliate ornament lines the top of each archway. The same motifs are used to frame the central panel, but with slightly more detail and refinement. The foliate frieze lining the top of the arch is more detailed; it closely follows the outer frieze with alternating acanthus leaves and vegetal motifs. The shift in hierarchy of importance that the frieze enacts is carried through to the central panel, where the repetition of the motif on a slightly smaller scale signals the resolution that occurs with the Coronation of the Virgin.

Imagining the Santa Chiara Polyptych displayed in the recess beneath a ponderous carved and gilded wooden structure, one that perhaps contained manifold architectural niches like the barco represented by Carpaccio, the arches and aedicules that frame Paolo Veneziano's painted scenes in the Santa Chiara Polyptych take on a greater sense of immediacy. The ornament was a means to connect the object to the most prominent architectural features of the church interior. Just as the mendicant and lay audiences of Santa Chiara experienced the church through the apertures of a monumental dividing structure, today's viewers of the Santa Chiara Polyptych look through the apertures of a gilded microarchitecture to apprehend the stories of Christ, the Virgin, Francis, and Clare.

Objects such as the Santa Chiara Polyptych were the result of collaboration between painters and woodcarvers. Undoubtedly, a workshop master such as Paolo would have been responsible for implementing a comprehensive vision for the design of the object. At the same time, the intaiador had the freedom to respond to this plan with his preferred selection of

ornamental motifs. The woodcarver's expertise lent the object its commanding physical presence and initiated a dialog with the contemporary arts of goldwork and architecture. The intaiador who created the frames had access to the ornamental vocabulary that defined the contemporary production in both of these sectors. These motifs were deployed strategically to guide the viewer's perception of the altarpiece's subjects. Carved in high relief, the microarchitectural frame distances the stories of Christ, Francis, and Clare as it creates a structure for containment. This structure grounded the polyptych in the physical world of the object's original audience. It also encouraged an understanding of the altarpiece in terms of the contemporary architectural traditions of church interiors, as well as the wider material culture of fourteenth-century Venice, which will be explored in the following chapter.

5.   The Santa Chiara Polyptych and Its Aesthetic Context:
The Intersection of the Arts in Fourteenth-Century Venice

The early 1340s was a period of fervent artistic production in Venice. Under the aegis of the doge, extensive projects were undertaken at Venice's most important religious and civic sites, namely the Basilica of San Marco and the Doge's Palace. Buildings were expanded, and new works were commissioned from goldsmiths, mosaicists, manuscript illuminators, and painters. The Santa Chiara Polyptych was made in dialog with these developments. The carved and gilded ornament of its frame approximates the appearance of objects by contemporary goldsmiths on a larger scale. At the same time, it adapts ornamental devices from contemporary architecture on a smaller than human scale. The previous chapter made note of how the principal ornamental elements of the polyptych's frame signal key transitional moments in the narrative progress of the altarpiece's iconography. These ornamental motifs include aedicules, triforate arches, serpentine columns, foliate scrolls, and the shell lunette that crowns the center of the altarpiece. The present chapter will examine how these details relate to those appearing in contemporaneous architecture and the decorative arts. The goal is to demonstrate how the Santa Chiara Polyptych functioned at the nexus of categories of artistic production, referencing the surrounding environment and meeting the demands of patrons to guide devotional experience within a Franciscan convent.

For scholars who have studied the Santa Chiara Polyptch, the steeply gabled aedicules interspersed with pinnacles signal its insistently Gothic ornamental style. Like Venice's intact medieval urban core Paolo's altarpiece exemplifies the centrality of the Gothic style in the city's visual culture. It is therefore worthwhile considering what the modern term Gothic, and related

fourteenth-century Italian terms such as *teutonico, tedesco* or *tramontino* might usefully designate in this context.

As Marvin Trachtenberg has argued, the art historical narrative that presents the Gothic in terms of structural analyses of buildings that rest on the assumption of a unified design system perfected in the cathedrals of the Ile-de-France finds little purchase on the Gothic design elements we find applied heterogeneously in Italian centers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[436] In his contribution to the question Trachtenberg proposes that Italian engagement with the Gothic is best approached as a productive synthesis of the diverse body of cultural material encountered in the peninsula." [437] Such a model is certainly appropriate for the art and architecture produced in the capital of the maritime trading empire of Venice.

In sixteenth-century Italy Gothic came to represent anything opposed to the legacy of Roman classicism celebrated by Renaissance artists and intellectuals, but this was a relatively late development.[438] In his architectural treatise published in 1465, Antonio Averlino, called

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[436] See Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale* (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1950); Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957); Otto Georg von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); Wilhelm Schlink, "Gothic Cathedral as Heavenly Jerusalem: a Fiction in German Art History," in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Art,* ed. Bianca Kühnel, 275–85 (Jerusalem: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998).

[437] Marvin Trachtenberg, "Gothic/Italian 'Gothic': Toward a Redefinition," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 50, 1 (1991): 22–37; see also Caroline Bruzelius, "A Rose by Any Other Name: The 'Not Gothic Enough' Architecture of Italy (Again)," in *Reading Gothic Architecture,* ed. Matthew Reeve, 93–109 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

[438] Paul Frankl, "The Term 'Gothic' and the Concept of the Gothic Style," in *Gothic Architecture* (New York: Penguin Books, 1962), 217–218; see also Xenia Muratova, "Questa maniera fu trovata da i Goti…," in *Il Gotico europeo in Italia,* ed. Valentino Pace and Martina Bagnoli, 23–47 (Naples: Electa, 1994). The term Gothic entered the language of art criticism with the theoretical treatises of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian humanists, and therefore postdates the period of Paolo Veneziano's activity. Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) and others appropriated the term from ancient histories as a means to assert the primacy of their own regional intellectual traditions.

Filarete (1400–1469), used language that comes closer to describing how Gothic ornamental styles were perceived in Paolo Veneziano's time. He calls works that involve Gothic ornament "lavori moderni [modern works]."[439] For Filarete the modern works represented the style of recent eras, which was on the road to becoming passé.[440] For Paolo Veneziano's contemporaries a century earlier, Gothic ornament may well have been the most up to date style.

Filarete's observations on Gothic works are also pertinent to the question of ornament in Venetian altarpieces. Remarking on its adaptability to different scales, he succinctly describes how a unified system of ornamental design could be simultaneously applied to small and large-scale objects:

> Goldsmiths make [their works] in the form and guise of tabernacles and thuribles for burning incense, and they make buildings in the same form and guise, because they look beautifully in and are more suitable to their works than to buildings; and, as I said, this usage and manner they learned from people beyond the Alps, that is, German and French…[441]
> Gli orefici fanno loro a quella somilitudine e forma de' tabernacoli e de' turibili da dare incenso; et a quella somilitudine e forma fatti i dificij perché a quegli lavori paiano begli; et anche più si confanno ne' lor lavori, che non fanno ne' dificij. E questo huso e modo anno avuto … da tramontani, cioè da Todeschi e da Francesi…[442]

While Filarete certainly casts doubt on the wisdom of translating the ornamental language of goldworks into architecture, two aspects of his discussion are relevant to the consideration of the style of Paolo's Veneziano's altarpieces. The first is the claim that the ornamental language that characterizes *lavori moderni* originated in the small-scale objects created by goldsmiths and

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[439] Quoted in Trachtenberg, "Toward a Redefinition," 22.
[440] Trachtenberg, "Toward a Redefinition," 22–23.
[441] Quoted in Frankl, *Gothic Architecture,* 858–59.
[442] Quoted in Francois Bucher, "Micro-Architecture as the 'Idea' of Gothic Theory and Style," *Gesta* 15 (1976): 71–89, 74, n. 29.

could be adapted to larger formats, and the second is that he uses simple geographical or regional designations as his descriptors.[443]

The latter practice is also observable in the Forzetta document discussed in the introduction. In this document the Trevisan notary uses the term Teutonic with reference to a specific kind of object or mode of production, the origins of which could be traced to German artisans.[444] Whether it was in terms of material, technique, pictorial style, or ornament, the arts associated with northern Europe were the primary frame of reference for Paolo Veneziano in the mind of a contemporary observer. The ornamental styles of the Gothic tradition, which Filarete astutely noted could be seamlessly applied to both small-scale objects and built architecture, are a salient concern in the art of Paolo Veneziano. They appear simultaneously in the thrones where his holy figures sit, and in the three-dimensional carving of the frames affixed to the surface of his panels. Outside his altarpieces this same ornamental vocabulary was emerging as a more general phenomenon in Venice. The following paragraphs will analyze the ornamental vocabularies of a variety of objects produced during the peak of Paolo Veneziano's workshop activity to demonstrate how his altarpieces interacted with the contemporary visual culture and patronage conditions.

An especially influential patron active during the date ranges proposed for the Santa Chiara Polyptych's production (1333–1345) was the scholar doge Andrea Dandolo. This important historical figure was responsible for an extensive patronage campaign that featured the renovation of the Pala d'Oro (fig. 68), or the golden altarpiece on the high altar of the central

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[443] For more on the adaptability of scale that characterizes the Gothic tradition, see the essays in Jean-Marie Guillouet and Ambre de Bruyne-Vilain, eds., *Microarchitectures médiévales: l'échelle à l'épreuve de la matière* (Paris: Picard, 2018).

[444] See the introduction for a detailed discussion of Oliviero Forzetta's mention of Marco and Paolo Veneziano's association with northern European art.

Venetian church of San Marco, a project that involved the workshop of Paolo Veneziano. As demonstrated in the first chapter, the Dandolo also had ties to the Franciscan Order and the convent of Santa Chiara. Taken together, the many art patronage projects undertaken by Andrea Dandolo first as procurator of San Marco (1328–1343) and later as doge (r. 1343–1354) constitute a context for characterizing what Gothic ornamentation signified in fourteenth-century Venice. Andrea was the scion of an important noble family that produced three previous doges. He was an historian and legal scholar who was directly involved in the principal intellectual currents and political circumstances of his time.[445]

The young doge commissioned objects in a wide range of media including manuscripts, goldwork, panel paintings, and major mosaic cycles. Most of Andrea Dandolo's patronage activity is centered on the environment of San Marco. Restoration of the Pala d'Oro began when Andrea was still serving as a procurator of San Marco. This altarpiece was a composite object comprised of Byzantine enamels.[446] Some of these enamels were commissioned from Constantinople in the early twelfth century, while others were brought to Venice as war booty following the Fourth Crusade, which was led by Andrea's ancestor doge Enrico Dandolo (1108–1205). To further support devotional activities at San Marco, Andrea commissioned three liturgical books, which survive as the greatest achievement in fourteenth-century Venetian

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[445] Giorgio Ravegnani, "Andrea Dandolo," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1986), 432–40; see also Ester Pastorello, "Introduction," *Chronica per Extensum Descripta,* ed. Ester Pastorello, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores,* ed. L.A. Muratori XII, I (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1942-51); for an analysis of Andrea Dandolo's historical writings, see Girolamo Arnaldi, "Andrea Dandolo Doge-Cronista," in *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI: Aspetti e problemi,* ed. Agostino Pertusi, 127–268 (Florence: Olschki, 1970).

[446] See Hans Hahnloser and Renato Polacco, *La Pala d'Oro* (Venice: Canal & Stamperia, 1994); Holger Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium in Venice, ca. 1200–1400," in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice,* ed. Henry Maguire and Robert Nelson, 193–227 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010); Goffen, "Il paliotto della Pala d'Oro di Paolo Veneziano e la committenza del doge Andrea Dandolo, 313–334.

manuscript illumination.[447] The mosaic cycles in the Baptistry and chapel of San Isidoro are monumental examples of Andrea Dandolo's program of state patronage.[448]

Foundational scholarship by Hugo Buchtal, Hans Belting, and Debra Pincus interprets the iconography and pictorial styles of works commissioned by Andrea Dandolo as an assertion of Venice's newfound parity with the Byzantine Empire.[449] These authors argue that by commissioning works of art with a pictorial style similar to the contemporaneous production in the Byzantine Empire, Andrea Dandolo asserted his state's dominance in the Mediterranean sphere. Another aspect of Andrea Dandolo's art patronage at San Marco has received less attention in the previous scholarship, namely, the prevalence of Gothic ornament. The renovation of the Pala d'Oro featured a series of Gothic frames that were applied to the surface of the Byzantine enamel plaques. The same ornamental style was also a defining aspect of the contemporaneous expansion of the Doge's Palace (fig. 70).

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[447] Giordana Mariani Canova, "La miniature nei libri liturgici marciani," in *Musica e liturgia a San Marco: Testi e melodie per la liturgia delle ore XII al XVII secolo, dal graduale tropato del Duecento ai graduali cinquecenteschi,* vol. 1, ed. Giulio Cattin, 149–88 (Venice: Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 1990); Marta Minazzato, "Maestri dell'Epistolario, dell'Evangelistario e del Messale di San Marco a Venezia," in *Dizionario biografico dei miniatori italiani: secoli IX–XVI,* ed. Milvia Bollati, 429–31 (Milan: Sylvestre Bonnard, 2004); Helena Katalin Szépe, "Doge Andrea Dandolo and Manuscript Illumination," in *Miniatura: lo sguardo e la parola,* ed. Federica Toniolo and Gennaro Toscano, 158-161 (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2012).

[448] Debra Pincus, "Venice and its Doge in the Grand Design," Andrea Dandolo and the Fourteenth-Century Mosaics of the Baptistery," 245–271; see also Pincus, *The Tombs of the Doges of Venice*, 121–48.

[449] Hugo Buchtal, *Historia Troiana; Studies in the History of Medieval Secular Illustration* (London: Warburg Institute, 1971); Debra Pincus, "Andrea Dandolo and Visible History: the San Marco Projects," 191–206; Hans Belting, "Dandolo's Dreams: Venetian State Art and Byzantium, 138–154.

The expansion of the Doge's Palace began in 1340, when Andrea Dandolo was still serving as a procurator of San Marco.[450] In the role of procurator Andrea would have overseen the built fabric and the financial endowment of the state church of San Marco, a purview that included the adjacent civic complex of the Doge's Palace.[451] The procurators' involvement in aesthetic decisions pertaining to the Doge's Palace has been documented for the period corresponding to the production of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, therefore making it highly likely that Andrea Dandolo was closely involved with the project, both as procurator and doge.[452]

Narrow columns, pointed arches, foliate ornament, quatrefoils, and tracery: the standard features of Gothic architecture and object design encountered throughout late medieval Europe were applied with particular verve and invention in Venice.[453] The Doge's Palace is the supreme example of the local version of the Gothic tradition.[454] Local building typologies, such as the two-storied arcades common in early Venetian palaces, were updated with elaborate Gothic ornament.[455] The recurrence of motifs from the Doge's Palace in private homes built for the

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[450] Andrea Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast' in Venedig: Baugeschichte und Skulpturenprogramm des Palatium Communis Venetiarum* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2005).

[451] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 261; see also Reinhold C. Mueller, "The Procurators of San Marco in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: A Study of the Office as a Financial and Trust Institution," *Studi Veneziani* 13 (1971): 105–220.

[452] Lermer, 260–63; see also Giambattista Lorenzi, *Documenti per servire alla storia del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia ovvero serie di atti pubblici dal 1253 al 1797,* vol. I (Venice: Visentini, 1868), documents 50, 51, and 90 are receipts for commissions from the Procurators of San Marco that include work on the Capella di San Niccolò within the complex of the Doge's Palace, gilding of two statues on the "porta scalarum," and a lion sculpture for a principal doorway.

[453] Edoardo Arslan, *Gothic Architecture in Venice,* trans. Anne Engel (London: Phaidon, 1972).

[454] Alvise Zorzi, ed., *Il Palazzo Ducale di Venezia* (Turin: ERI, 1972); see introduction to Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast'* for a summary and reassessment of the principal nineteenth and twentieth-century literature.

[455] Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 90, see also 34 for the Ca' Loredan, a notable example of the early Veneto-Byzantine palace type.

Venetian patriciate throughout the following century demonstrates the building's far-reaching influence.[456]

The development of the Doge's Palace as it exists today begins with a foundational event in Venetian history. Though it is known as the *Serrata,* or closure, of the Maggior Consiglio, the electoral reform legislated in 1297 actually expanded the number of people eligible to sit on Venice's largest governing council.[457] The council's membership tripled through the legislation enacted between 1286 and 1323.[458] The larger council required more space; in 1340 an expansion of the palace was ordered to accommodate it. [459] The building was extended to the south and west, featuring the delicate and heavily ornamented colonnades that give the building its distinctive appearance. The monumental structure presides over the wider environment of the ceremonial and civic center of the Piazza San Marco, bridging the church's state devotion with the city's present civic life.[460] Fourteenth-century records demonstrate that ground floor spaces

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[456] Manfred Schuller, "Le facciate dei palazzi medioevali di Venezia: ricerche su singoli esempi architettonici," in *L'Architettura Gotica Veneziana,* ed. Francesco Valcanover and Wolfgang Wolters, 281–345. (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, 2000).

[457] See Guido Ruggiero, *The Renaissance in Italy: a Social and Cultural History of the Rinascimento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 82–89 for a description of the Serrata in relation to communal forms of government developed in other Italian cities in the fourteenth century.

[458] Frederic Lane, "The Enlargement of the Great Council Hall of Venice," in *Florilegium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson,* ed. J.G. Rowe and W.H. Stockdale, 236–74 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 245.

[459] See Manfred Schuller, "Il Palazzo Ducale di Venezia: le facciate medioevale," in *L'architettura gotica veneziana: atti del convegno internazionale di studio, 1996,* ed. Francesco Valcanover and Wolfgang Wolters, 351–427 (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, 2000).

[460] Juergen Schulz, "Urbanism in Medieval Venice," in *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy: Athens and Rome, Florence and Venice,* ed. Athony Mohlo et. al., 134-156 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

within the walls of the Doge's Palace and beneath the porticoes were rented for commercial activities, emphasizing the building's public, accessible nature.[461]

Whether seen from afar in the waters of the San Marco basin, or experienced more closely, perhaps by walking around the building's corner that sharply projects into the space of the Piazzetta (fig. 70), the principal values that the building communicates are visual complexity and permeability. The Piazzetta is the smaller open space that connects the Piazza di San Marco to the waterfront of the Bacino di San Marco. The eastern façade of the Doge's Palace faces the Piazzetta. Far from the sense of strength and impregnability evident in other Italian halls of state such as the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence (built 1299–1314), the Doge's Palace reads as a structure that welcomes passage into its interior. On the ground floor, thirty-six columns support pointed arches. The second story loggia is enlivened by a crystalline web of columns and apertures, created by an interplay of seventy-two columns and ogee arches interspersed with quatrefoils. The building's design seems to defy structural concerns to affirm the value of ornamentation above all else.

The visual symphony of ornament is articulated in a staccato progression sustained across the Piazzetta and Molo facades. The Molo is the paved stretch of waterfront along the Bacino di San Marco on the southern side of the Doge's Palace. Narrow friezes of floral rosettes demarcate the upper and lower confines of the second story loggia (fig. 70). More rosettes occupy the spandrels between the quatrefoils above the loggia's colonnade. Heraldic lions peer out from the lower register of spandrels beneath the quatrefoils and between the ogee arches. The decorative campaign terminates in tabernacles positioned at the corners of the building, anchoring a frieze of crenellations that are divorced from any protective function. Ornamentation is even threaded

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[461] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 249.

into the structure of the building itself. The expanse of wall above the two stories of colonnades

is built of brickwork that was laid out in a decorative lozenge pattern of alternating stone blocks

of Istrian stone and red and gray veronese and brocatello marble.[462]

The facades once shone with a greater brilliance than what is seen today. Studies

conducted during recent restoration campaigns indicate that the varied colors of the brickwork

may have been heightened with an oil coating.[463] The fifteenth-century Gothic apparition

window on the Molo façade bears traces of blue paint, suggesting a lost polychromy.[464] The

window was designed by the Venetian sculptors Jacopo and Pierpaolo dalle Masegne and was

added to the façade in 1404.[465] Similar traces of polychromy found on other fourteenth and

fifteenth century palaces indicate that polychromy was once a standard ornamental vocabulary in

the architecture of Gothic Venice.[466] This lost aspect of the ornamental vocabulary can be related

to the red and blue color scheme still preserved in the altarpieces of Paolo Veneziano's

workshop, including the Saint Lucy polyptych (fig. 8), the San Giacomo Maggiore polyptych,

(fig. 9), and the panel of the Virgin with two donors in Venice's Accademia (fig. 7).

Together with a lost polychrome aesthetic, elaborate foliate carvings are a defining

feature of the building's ornamental vocabulary. Ornament and iconography are bound together

in the building's structural elements. This intermingling affirms the ornamental register as a

crucial site for the articulation of meaning. The merging of structure, ornamentation, and

meaning was realized in an iconographic scheme maintained across the many building

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[462] Schuller, "Palazzo Ducale: facciate medioevale," 407, Schuller dates the execution of the brickwork to 1400 or later, but notes that it must have been planned from the earliest building campaigns.

[463] Schuller, "Palazzo Ducale: facciate medioevale," 407.

[464] Schuller.

[465] Howard, Architectural History of Venice, 92.

[466] Schuller, "Palazzi Medioevali di Venezia," 328-329.

campaigns that continued into the early fifteenth century.[467] The ground floor corners of the

building feature relief carvings of biblical narratives that demonstrate themes related to justice

and potential transgression against it: the Fall of Man, the Drunkenness of Noah, and the

Judgment of Solomon. Each scene is presided over by a corresponding archangel inserted into

the tracery of the second story loggia. Across the span of the loggia and portico, finely carved

foliate ornament conceals a wealth of iconographic subjects. A variety of themes present an

encyclopedic range of knowledge: representations of flora and fauna, the races and ages of man,

virtues and vices, allegorical representations of celestial bodies, and scenes of courtly love

among others. The fresco cycle in the Great Council Hall of Padua and Perugia's Fontana

Maggiore are related examples of civic projects that represent the integration of the local state's

rule with the divinely sanctioned natural order.[468] The diverse subjects represented on the

capitals of the Doge's Palace draw on theological traditions such as Thomas Aquinas's Neo-

Aristotelian theology to represent the appearances of the natural world as a manifestation of

divine justice.[469] Fra Paolino (d. 1344), the dynamic Franciscan monk and author of historical

chronicles, who served as Venetian ambassador to Robert of Anjou in Naples and the Papal

Court at Avignon, has been credibly proposed as an author for the complex iconographic

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[467] William Burges and Adolphe-Napoléon Didron, "Iconographie du Palais Ducal de Venise," *Annales Archéologiques* 17 (1857): 69–88, 193–216; Antonio Manno, *Il Poema del tempo - i capitelli del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia: storia e iconografia* (Venice: Canal & Stamperia, 1999), Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 91–279; Daniel Savoy, "Keeping the Myth Alive: Andrea Dandolo and the Preservation of Justice at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice," *Artibus et historiae* 71 (2015): 9–31.

[468] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 77 for Fontana Maggiore; for Padua see Lucio Grossato, "La decorazione pittorica del Salone," in *Il Palazzo della Ragione di Padova,* 45–67 (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1964).

[469] Savoy, "Andrea Dandolo and the Preservation of Justice," 11.

cycle.[470] Andrea Dandolo's Venetian chronicles frequently referenced Fra Paolino's historical writings, which were strongly influenced by Neo-Aristotelian theology.[471]

The far-reaching iconography of the Doge's Palace is distilled into its most salient passages at key junctures of the building's architecture. For example, the southwest corner warns about the transgression against Justice with the relief of the Fall of Man (fig. 71). The acanthus leaves in the large capital below the monumental relief sculpture are where the biblical story is integrated with the wider understanding of the cosmos. In the capital below the sculpture of Adam and Eve, one small relief carving represents the Creation of Adam amidst a series of allegorical representations of the planets; inscriptions identify the parts of the body that these planets "rule" according to the traditions of medieval astrology.[472] The capital in the portico above the Fall of Man features allegorical figures of the winds that blow from the four cardinal directions.[473] Humanity's origins and the reasons for its present circumstances are presented together with the natural forces that govern them. The iconographic ensemble is completed above by the figure of the Archangel Michael carrying the sword of Justice, signaling the coming resolution of humanity's precarious existence at nature's mercy.

At the southwest corner, ornamentation and signification merge with the building's architecture at a structural level. The central arbiter of this communicative juncture is foliate ornament. The sturdy forms of the columns extend into elaborate scrolls of acanthus leaves that contain the allegorical figures on each of the capital's eight sides. The principal figures of Adam and Eve are supported by pediments of detailed foliage. The foliate ornament exhibits its greatest

[470] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 264–266.
[471] Lermer, 265.
[472] Lermer, "Kapitell P 18," 148-157; Manno, *Poema del Tempo,* cat. No. 19, 114–120.
[473] Lermer, "Eckkapitell L 35," 207–208.

expressive potential in the narrative sculptures of the Fall of Man and the Drunkenness of Noah (figs. 71, 72). A tree trunk extends upward from the pediment of acanthus leaves, dividing the principal figures of the narrative. In most Italian communal palaces, the corners feature structural reinforcements and even defensive elements.[474] Instead, the Doge's Palace uses this structural juncture for pictorial representation with the relief sculptures. Foliate ornamentation visually integrates the reliefs' content into the building's structure. The Tree of Knowledge at the southwest corner, and Noah's grapevine at the southeast, extend outwards into open space, deflecting attention from the sharp projection of the building's corner and encouraging movement around it.[475] When viewed from below, the fig tree and vines extend upwards into the frieze of rosettes that separate the ground floor portico from the loggia, harmonizing the confrontation of the latter's broad monumentality with the screen of tracery above.

An equally potent demonstration of the integration of pictorial decoration with architectural form is in the extension of the story of the *Drunkenness of Noah* around the southeast corner (fig. 72). Immediately adjacent to the figure of Noah, but just on the other side of the grape vine that marks the building's corner, the prudent sons Shem and Japhet hold the drapery that covers their father's nakedness. Meanwhile, the imprudent Ham raises his hands in surprise at the nudity of his father. The distinction between the brothers' behavior is reinforced by the open expanse of the archway that marks the terminus of the southern colonnade. Just to the right of the figure of Cam, an isolated band of billet molding separates the loggia and its narrative iconography from the unadorned expanse of wall beyond. The intermingling of structure, ornamentation, and meaning throughout the Doge's Palace presents strategies that

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[474] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 77.
[475] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 77.

were available to painters such as Paolo Veneziano and the woodcarvers who collaborated with him. The ornamentation in the frame therefore becomes a central communicative aspect of the work of art.

In the Santa Chiara Polyptych, foliate ornament takes the form of the continuous frieze of alternating pomegranates and acanthus leaves that separate the Christological scenes in the lower portion of the altarpiece from the topmost register of Franciscan scenes (fig. 4). A simple band of individual leaves lines the upper edge of each of the triforate arches that frame the Christological scenes. The central archway above the Coronation scene is surmounted by an especially delicate frieze of alternating acanthus leaves and pomegranates. The vast scheme of foliate ornament applied to the colonnades of the Doge's Palace offered a potent precedent for the makers and viewers of the Santa Chiara Polyptych and related objects in fourteenth-century Venice. The ornamental device of acanthus leaves integrates the building's iconographic content with its physical structure. The confluence of iconography and ornament activates the open archways of the ground floor loggia as sites for an experiential encounter of the Venetian government's rule as a just and righteous participant in the hierarchy of creation. In the frame of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, foliate ornament emphasizes the archways as sites of imaginative passage, no less active for the lack of physical access they provide. The Doge's Palace sets the scene for the integration of structure, ornamentation, and meaning in the Venetian trecento on a monumental scale.

While much of the literature that interprets the Doge's Palace looks to eastern precedents to account for the building's striking appearance, it also involves an engagement with long

established local forms.[476] For example, the two facades of colonnades evoke the traditional

format of the Veneto-Byzantine palace, as seen in examples such as the early thirteenth-century

Ca' Loredan.[477] At the same time that it responds to Venetian architectural typologies more

broadly, the distinctive features of the Doge's Palace are also adaptations of some of the most

memorable details of San Marco. The tradition of adorning facades with relief sculpture was

long established at the Venetian state church: the biblical narratives at the corners of the Doge's

Palace recall the Byzantine relief icons and images of Hercules on the church's façade.[478] The

passages of ornamental geometric patterns in the thirteenth-century mosaic representation of San

Marco in the Porta Sant' Alipio offers a precedent for San Marco's patterned walls.[479] The

tradition of spoliation initiated at San Marco with the Fourth Crusade made the edifice a site of

continual accumulation and reinvention. In this spirit of continual renovation, Gothic tracery was

added to the windows opening into the narthex in the portals to the left and right of San Marco's

central door in the early fourteenth century (fig. 74).[480] The triforate arches and quatrefoils of

these windows' tracery would become the defining visual feature of the Doge's Palace, both in

the tracery of the second story loggia and in the tracery that once filled all of the building's

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[476] John Ruskin atmospherically described the structure as the "central building of the world" for its intermingling of Gothic ornament, eastern precedents, and later engagement with classicism in the Renaissance courtyard, *The Stones of Venice,* vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, 1851), 17; Deborah Howard has pursued these connections more fully, comparing the patterned brickwork of the facades to Ilkhanid monuments of fourteenth-century Persia, in *Venice and the East: the Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture,* 179, 200; see also Enio Concina, *Storia dell' Architettura di Venezia dal VII al XX secolo* (Milan: Electa, 1995), 90. Concina compares the patterned brickwork to the Tekfur Saray in Constaninople.

[477] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 67–68.

[478] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 73.

[479] Lermer.

[480] Schuller, "Palazzo Ducale: facciate medioevale," 426.

windows.[481] This accumulation of details visually links the Doge's Palace with the core site of Venetian devotional activity and demonstrates how the building's design articulates a modernizing aesthetic.

The modernizing aesthetic also plays out within the discourse of the ornamental motifs themselves. For example, the frieze of floral rosettes delimiting the upper and lower confines of the second story loggia can be understood as an adaptation of the foliate ornament that had been applied to architecture in Venice for centuries.[482] The twelfth-century arches of the Corte Seconda del Milion (fig. 75) show regularized scrolling vines that contain floral rosettes and animal motifs. On the exterior of the Doge's Palace, this pervasive ornamental tradition was distilled into the repeating pattern of rosettes carved in relief against a plain background.

The modernizing aesthetic observable in the Doge's Palace and the façade of San Marco is also apparent in the design of small-scale objects. Important examples of metalwork created for San Marco during the period under examination include the reliquary of the arm of Saint George preserved in the treasury of San Marco (fig. 76). This reliquary and the new framework that was made for it in 1325 demonstrate the emergence of a new aesthetic in Venice's ecclesiastical center in the years leading up to the production of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.[483] Following the Fourth Crusade, which was led by Andrea's ancestor Enrico Dandolo, a cache of relics were brought from Constantinople to Venice. Among them was the arm of St. George, then

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[481] Schuller, 396–400, the two easternmost windows on the molo facade are the only remaining examples of the original appearance of the building's Gothic window tracery.

[482] See Fulvio Zuliani, "Conservazione ed innovazione nel lessico architettonico veneziano del XIII e XIV secolo," in *L'architettura Gotica Veneziana,* ed. Francesco Valcanover, 29–34 (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, 2000).

[483] Hans Hahnloser, ed., *Il Tesoro di San Marco: il Tesoro e il museo* (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), cat. no. 159, 162–63; see also Martina Bagnoli, ed., *Treasure of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), cat. no. 51.

encased in a plain Byzantine silver reliquary. In a 1325 inventory of San Marco's treasury, the

procurators Pietro Grimani and Angelo Mudazio noted that a new "revetment" was being made

for the reliquary.[484]

The reliquary was dramatically transformed with the addition of the revetment. The

elemental simplicity of the Byzantine silver reliquary was replaced with a complex interplay of

Gothic architectural forms and organic ornament. Two vertical bands with enamel depictions of

saints in pointed Gothic arches recall stained glass windows. These passages of architectural

ornament flank a central foliate grille that contains alternating rosettes and busts of saints. Four

large stems sprouting leaves fan out from the bottom of the cone to form the reliquary's base.

More flowering branches unfurl from the sides of the reliquary, blooming into busts of saints. A

hinge at the bottom of the central band of delicate vine work allows it to be opened to facilitate

viewing of the enclosed original reliquary. In many ways the Saint George reliquary can be

considered a precedent for Andrea Dandolo's restoration of the Pala d'Oro, the patronage project

of greatest relevance to the Santa Chiara Polyptych. In both the reliquary and the altarpiece,

Byzantine objects with a venerable provenance were encased in a modern framework that

repeated the ornamental styles favored in objects and architectural sites popular in courtly

centers close at hand and further afield. Venetian procurators and doges sought to ensure that the

relics in their care were adequately presented for the veneration of the saints. The newer

ornamental styles localize the devotional practice to the present context and affirm Venice's

parity with other important ruling centers.

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[484] Hahnloser, *Tesoro di San Marco,* 163, the reliquary has been altered in later restorations but preserves its original appearance. Later additions include the sixteenth-century figure of Saint George on horseback added to replace a lost original as well as amethysts and zircons added in the nineteenth century. Only two of the original eight saints' busts remain. To account for missing pieces, the enamels were arranged on one side of the reliquary in the nineteenth century.

The Pala d'Oro displayed over the high altar of San Marco, is the example par excellence of lavish reframing (fig. 68). With its three production campaigns that stretch from the early twelfth century to the mid-1340s, the golden altarpiece involves a complex historical narrative unto itself.[485] The composite object visible today began with Doge Ordelaffo Falier's (r. 1102–1118) twelfth-century commission of an ensemble of Byzantine enamel plaques from workshops in Constantinople. This early object could have taken the form of either an altar frontal or dossal displayed on top of the altar. Following the Fourth Crusade in the early thirteenth century, procurator Angelo Falier commissioned an expansion of the object to feature spoils taken from Constantinople. These included monumental plaques of the Archangel Michael and scenes from the Life of Christ, likely from the iconostasis of Constantinople's Pantocrator monastery. The final production campaign of the Pala d'Oro dates from 1343 to 1345, when Andrea Dandolo commissioned Venetian goldsmiths to transform the composite altarpiece into the visually overwhelming object seen today – a multitude of holy figures and narrative scenes enshrined in intricate Gothic frames.

Andrea Dandolo's patronage is commemorated with two plaques at the bottom of the altarpiece beneath the central image of Christ. The inscriptions emphasize Andrea's patronage as part of the continuum of ducal support for the Pala d'Oro's enhancement:

> Anno milleno Centeno iungito Quinto
> -tunc Ordelafus Faledrus in urbe ducabat –
> Hec nova facta fuit gemis ditissima pala'
> Que nova facta fuit te, Petre, ducante, Ziani,
> et procurabat tunc Angelus acta Faledrus
> anno milleno bis centeno noveno.
>
> Post quadrageno quinto post mille trecentos
> Dandulus Andreas, preclarus honore, ducabat;

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[485] Renato Polacco, "Una nuova lettura della Pala d'Oro, gli smalti, le oreficerie, e il ciborio," in *La Pala d'Oro,* ed. Hahnloser and Polacco, 115–147 (Venice: Canal & Stamperia, 1994).

Nobilibusque viris tunc procurantibus almam
Ecclesiam Marci venerandam iure beati
De Lauredani Marco Frescoque Quirino
Tunc vetus hec pala gemis preciosis novatur.[486]

In the year 1105
when doge Ordelaffo Falier ruled the city
this panel of precious gems was created new
and this panel was renovated under your dogate, o Pietro Ziani
and under the procuratorship of Angelo Falier
in the year 1209

In the year 1340 Andrea Dandolo, famous and honorable was doge
And under the noble procurators of the holy revered church of Mark, truly blessed
Marco Loredan and Francesco Querini,
so this ancient panel was renewed with precious gems

 The first of the two plaques traces the object to its origins, noting that it was made when Ordelaffo Falier ruled the city. The inscription also notes that, following the second renovation campaign under doge Pietro Ziani, the "ancient panel" was renewed with precious gems in 1345, when "Andrea Dandolo ruled with honor." The inscriptions' conclusion, with the word "novatur," emphasizes how renovation and modernization were the core aspect of patrons' relationship to the composite object. The new ornamentation added to the old Byzantine enamels maintains the interplay of foliate ornament and Gothic structure encountered in the Doge's Palace and the Saint George reliquary.

A puzzling aspect of the Pala d'Oro's iconography serves as a point of departure for consideration of what the aesthetic of Gothic modernization meant to the patron Andrea Dandolo. Between the two commemorative inscriptions, an enamel of the orans Virgin appears between two political figures: the altarpiece's original patron, Doge Ordelaffo Falier, and the Byzantine Empress Irene. David Buckton and John Osborne have demonstrated how the figures

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[486] Polacco, "Una nuova lettura," 1118-119. [Translation from the Italian published in Polacco, 1994.]

of the doge and the Empress are an indicator of the altarpiece's development and shift in meaning from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries.[487] Via comparison to the twelfth-century Crown of St. Stephen, a diplomatic gift to the King of Hungary which shows him among members of the Byzantine Imperial family, the authors conclude that the original configuration of the Pala d'Oro involved a representation of the doge alongside rulers of the Byzantine Komnenian dynasty. The Empress Irene would have originally been joined by her consort Alexios I, possibly alongside another family member to account for the spaces now filled by the two inscription plaques. During one of the subsequent renovation and production campaigns, likely following the Fourth Crusade, the political configuration was rearranged, in effect updated to emphasize Venetian supremacy. The emperor and his son were removed and the doge took the place of the Byzantines, bearing the added iconographic boost of a halo to match Irene's. In the resulting configuration, the altarpiece delivers an updated political statement. In it the altarpiece's Venetian past merges with the crowd of holy figures to link Christian history with the viewer's present. The key arbiter of this linkage of past and present is the architectural style of the ornamental frames.

Andrea Dandolo continued this tradition of updating the Pala d'Oro's content with the addition of the Gothic frames and precious gemstones. In most of the enamel plaques, the earlier architectural framework can still be seen (fig. 77). When the fourteenth-century goldwork frames are removed, a much simpler framework is revealed. Each of the figures are surrounded by a plain rounded arch. The enamel's cloisons lay out a simple yet elegant scheme of striations to suggest the form of serpentine columns. A frieze of vines covers the span of the arch, recalling

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[487] David Buckton and John Osborne, "The Enamel of Doge Ordelafo Falier on the Pala d'Oro in Venice," *Gesta* 39 (2000): 43–49, see also Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium," 198.

the schematic inhabited scrolls of early Venetian architecture, such as in the arches of the Corte

Seconda del Milion cited previously. In the renovated Pala d'Oro, the new Gothic architecture

was placed directly on top of the older Byzantine ornament. Andrea Dandolo's restoration added

a unified micro-architectural framework to the great assembly of enamels. As in the doge's

palace, a series of apertures formed a web of ornamental passageways that inspire awe for their

intricacy and invite close scrutiny as an invitation to imaginative passage.

As a result of Andrea Dandolo's intervention, a complex Gothic micro-architecture was

added to contain the crowd of holy figures and narrative scenes (fig. 68).[488] Aedicules, ogee

arches, and delicate pinnacles create the altarpiece's ornamental language. Each of the openings

in the Pala d'Oro's architecture is surrounded by a finely wrought frieze of foliate ornament. The

piers supporting the apostles' aedicules are inset with alternating acanthus leaves that shimmer

against a blue enamel background, making the interplay of reflective gold and the deep blue of

the recessed enamel plaques a central aspect of the altarpiece's aesthetic vocabulary. This visual

juxtaposition is repeated in every aperture, where a recessed enamel inset allows the delicate

goldwork of the leaf motifs to shine forward with heightened brilliance.

Beyond conferring brilliance, the ornamentation of the architectural framework reinforces

the iconography of the composite altarpiece. The steeply gabled triangular aedicules distinguish

the row of Apostles central to the Gospel narrative while the smaller plaques with the supporting

figures of the archangels and their prophetic forebears are contained within ogee arches. The

insistent physicality of the tripartite loggie terminating in delicate pinnacles in the upper portion

visually unites the narrative thread of the six scenes from the Life of Christ. Finally, the central

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[488] Hahnloser, Hans, "Le oreficerie della Pala d'Oro," in *La Pala d'Oro,* ed. Hahnloser and
Polacco, 81–101 (Venice: Canal & Stamperia, 1994).

apparition of Christ enthroned amongst the Four Evangelists is viewed through round apertures, suggesting the celestial remove appropriate for the triumphantly enthroned Christ, as opposed to the architectural logic of the framework that presents the supporting figures.

What did this new ornamental framework represent for Andrea Dandolo and Venetian viewers more broadly in 1345? As was the case with the restoration of the Doge's Palace begun just five years before, the central intention of the new frames added to the Pala d'Oro is modernization. Seeking to add to his predecessor Enrico Dandolo's accomplishments, Andrea embellished San Marco's high altarpiece with precious materials to make the object worthy of the city's patron saint.[489] The visual language chosen for this stylistic updating was the highly flexible and adaptable pan-European canon of Gothic ornament. Portable objects such as the Saint George reliquary and northern European counterparts like the Basin Portable Shrine demonstrate the aesthetic's broad diffusion (fig. 78).[490] These objects are witness to the European taste for elaborate modern designs that represented a sense of courtly prestige. The various republican forms of government exercised throughout fourteenth-century Italy developed their own local versions of this aesthetic to articulate their regime's relevance within a culture of elite taste popular throughout Europe.[491] Artists from various regions were drawn to courtly centers such as Avignon and Angevin Naples where an exchange of materials, techniques, and

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[489] Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium," 198 cites the original document in the Archivio di Stato in Venice, Maggior Consiglio, reg. Spiritus, c. 129.

[490] Manlio Mezzacasa, "Temi d'ornato e microtecniche nell' oreficeria gotica veneziana a paragone con le arti maggiori," 199–223; Elisabetta Cioni, *Scultura e Smalto nell' Oreficeria Senese dei secoli XIII e XIV* (Florence: SPES, 1998); Johann Michael Fritz, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik in Mitteleuropa* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1982).

[491] See Julius von Schlosser, "Ein veronesisches Bilderbuch und die höfische Kunst des XIV. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 16 (1895): 144230; Helene Wieruszowski, "Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante," *Speculum* 19, 1 (1944): 14–33; Jean Campbell, *The Game of Courting and the Art of the Comune of San Gimignano* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

designs resulted.[492] In Seigneurial courts closer at hand to Venice, dynasties such as the della

Scala adopted the ornamental styles favored by the European elite.[493] Fourteenth-century

Venetian objects such as the Sion textile and the wellhead in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

demonstrate the prominence of courtly themes in Venetian visual culture.[494] Both of these

objects created to enrich the rhythms of everyday life feature friezes of young men and women

dressed in the latest fashions who hold hands to perform a rondo dance to the accompaniment of

musical instruments.[495] In the complex foliate ornamentation of the capitals of the Doge's

Palace, which harbor an encyclopedic compendium of knowledge, and in the Pala d'Oro's

Gothic architecture embellished with gemstones, the Venetian artistic production scene under

Andrea Dandolo takes part in this far-reaching aesthetic.

It is this broadly diffused context of elite patronage that constitutes the most appropriate

context for the evaluation of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's design. As has already been

established, the workshop of Paolo Veneziano was connected both to Dandolo family patronage

in general and to the renovations at San Marco initiated by the doge Andrea. While Venetian

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[492] Sarah K. Kozlowski, "Circulation, Convergence, and the Worlds of Trecento Panel Painting: Simone Martini in Naples," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (2015): 205–238.

[493] Peter Seiler, "La trasformazione gotica della magnificenza signorile: committenza viscontea e scaligera nei monumenti sepolcrali dal tardo Duecento alla metà del Trecento," in *Il Gotico europeo in Italia,* ed. Valentino Pace and Martina Bagnoli, 119–140 (Naples: Electa, 1994).

[494] Debra Pincus, "The Turn Westward: New Stylistic Directions in Fourteenth-Century Venetian Sculpture," in Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque: a Cat's Cradel for Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, ed. David Levine, 25-38, esp. 36-38 (New York: Italica Press, 2010); see also Teresa Nevins, "Picturing Oedipus in the Sion Textile," in *The Woodcut in Fifteenth-Century Europe,* ed. Peter Parshall, 17-37 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) and Anita Moskowitz, *Italian Gothic Sculpture, c. 1250-c. 1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 244–247.

[495] Engagement with European traditions of courtly culture are evidenced in a broad swathe of cultural production in and around Venice, including literature, see Gianfranco Folena, "La cultura volgare e 'L'umanesimo cavalleresco' nel Veneto," *Culture e Lingue nel Veneto Medievale* (1964): 377–394; Enrica Cozzi, "Temi cavallereschi e profani nella cultura figurative Trevigiana dei secoli XII e XIV," in *Tomaso da Modena e il suo tempo,* 44–59 (Venice: Stamperia di Venezia, 1980).

goldsmiths made the new framework for the enamel plaques that made up the body of the Pala d'Oro, the Veneziano family workshop was commissioned to create a weekday cover for the complex altarpiece (fig. 69). This cover survives today as two long horizontal panels, each divided into seven compartments of icon-like half-length saints and narrative scenes. The upper register features Christ as Man of Sorrows between the Virgin and John the Evangelist – further surrounded by saints Theodore, Mark, Peter, and Nicholas of Bari. The lower panel is dedicated to a series of scenes from Saint Mark's hagiography. A signature inscription spread across two panels credits the work to Paolo Veneziano and his two sons Luca and Giovanni, noting the specific date that the altarpiece was completed: April 22, 1345 – the feast day of Saint Mark.[496] The prominent inscription emphasizes the workshop's justifiable pride in executing a commission by the doge for the high altar that contained the relics of the city's patron saint – a moment that can surely be described as the apex of the workshop's achievement. The opportunity to create the weekday cover for the Pala d'Oro would have involved close familiarity with the format and ornamentation of the Pala d'Oro to a degree that would have been unimaginable for most medieval viewers.[497]

The Veneziano family workshop's involvement in Andrea Dandolo's San Marco projects undoubtedly informed the design of the Santa Chiara Polyptych. The defining features of Andrea Dandolo's renovation of the Pala d'Oro, including the Gothic architectural frames and friezes of foliate ornament set against recessed blue enamel backgrounds, are also seen in the Santa Chiara

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[496] Goffen, "Il paliotto della Pala d'Oro di Paolo Veneziano e la commitenza del doge Andrea Dandolo," 313.

[497] Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium in Venice," 194, 199–200, the *Memoirs* of Sylvester Syropoulos provide an account of the experience of viewing the altarpiece in the fifteenth century, noting that "its mighty doors opened only twice a year, on the Nativity of Christ and the holy feast of Easter;" it is also likely that two marble sculptures of the Annunciation positioned behind the *Pala d'Oro* supported a pulley system to raise and lower the weekday cover.

Polyptych. The narrative enamel plaques and intricate goldwork frames are translated into the medium of painted panels and gilded relief carvings. The representational strategies visible in the Pala d'Oro and the Santa Chiara Polyptych exemplify the intersection of media that characterized artistic production in fourteenth-century Venice and Italy. Looking back to the tradition of Gothic art, Filarete noted the close visual correspondence that united the works of architects and goldsmiths. Paolo Veneziano designed large-scale polyptychs that make use of the same ornamental devices seen in goldwork objects and the architecture of the built environment. With the Santa Chiara Polyptych, Paolo Veneziano's workshop created an object that occupies a space in between.

The stylistic updating practiced in the expansion of the Doge's Palace and the renovation of the Pala d'Oro contributed to the design of the format and ornamentation of the Santa Chiara Polyptych, an object that mediated its original audience's experience of ritual performance and interior architectural space. The altarpiece's narrative content is encountered through a series of colonnades that evokes the permeability of the new architectural design of the Doge's Palace. In the frieze of pomegranates and acanthus leaves that separates the Christological sequence of the polyptych's lower portion from the Franciscan sequence of the upper register, foliate ornamentation is an arbiter of narrative content. Decorative elements such as the aedicules and crenellations that crown the building's upper story are evoked in the sharp projections of the micro-architecture in the altarpiece's upper register.

Just as the ornamental motifs of the Doge's Palace were deployed in the Pala d'Oro, so too were the new modes of framing employed by Paolo Veneziano in his altarpiece designs. As the enameled buttresses and foliate archways were applied to the surface of the Byzantine enamels in the Pala d'Oro, a gilded wooden framework of fine ornament was laid over the

surface of the panels painted by Paolo Veneziano (fig. 4). The wooden polyptych is a translation across media of the Pala d'Oro's intricate aesthetic. The interplay of goldwork and blue enamel encountered in the buttresses and archways in the Pala d'Oro is approximated in the Santa Chiara Polyptych in the alternating frieze of pomegranates and acanthus leaves, as well as in the more simplified foliate ornament that crowns each of the archways around the Christological scenes. The floral rosettes placed in the spandrels of the archways simultaneously recall the use of that motif on the facades of the Doge's Palace, and the gemstones in floral settings that occupy the space between the framing arches in the Pala d'Oro. Enclosed in their rounded archways, the eight scenes from the Life of Christ on either side of the Coronation of the Virgin evoke the form of the six large enamels dedicated to the same subject in the upper portion of the Pala d'Oro. In the Santa Chiara Polyptych's narrative scenes, the dark flesh tones, chrysography, and sculptural rendering of the draperies sharply delineate the scene's details against the backdrop of a burnished gold ground. With this interplay of reflective surfaces, the Pala d'Oro's multimedia accumulative aesthetic is translated into the practice of painting.

In fourteenth-century Venice, painting was not practiced in isolation. Workshops relied upon collaboration among teams of specialists conversant in diverse media. A wealth of visual stimuli were available to goldsmiths, painters, sculptors, and architects. Rather than a passive reception of Byzantine pictorial styles, the production of a polyptych was a multimedia synthesis of diverse sources of inspiration. Ornamental framing devices were adapted from architecture and objects such as the Saint George reliquary and the Pala d'Oro. Foundational to the local devotional culture, the Pala d'Oro inspired a pictorial aesthetic that featured the luster of materials including gold, glass, and gems.

What did the ornamental motifs encountered in the Santa Chiara Polyptych have the potential to say about the polyptych's relationship to the objects cited as comparisons in the previous pages? Andrea Dandolo's many commissions – the mosaics of the Baptistery and the Capella di San Isidoro, manuscripts for the celebration of the liturgy, and the renovation of the Pala d'Oro, circumscribe the environment of San Marco with his patronage. The details of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's design align the Franciscan altarpiece with Dandolo family patronage of major devotional objects in the environment of San Marco.

Paolo Veneziano's engagement with the Dandolo goes back even further in his career to 1339, when he created the panel painting for the tomb of Andrea's relative Francesco Dandolo. There is also a thread of intellectual history that unites the Dandolo, the Franciscans, and the aesthetic developments at the Doge's Palace. For the first two decades of the fourteenth century, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari was home to Fra Paolino, the scholar and diplomat monk whose writings later served as a source for Andrea Dandolo's historical chronicles.[498] Fra Paolino has also been proposed as the author for the iconographic program of the sculptural ornamentation of the Doge's Palace.[499] Francesco Dandolo and Fra Paolino were both present at the court of Avignon for diplomatic missions.[500] In light of this legacy of engagement with the Franciscan order and with one of its key players in Venice, the repeated mention of the Dandolo family at the convent of Santa Chiara emphasizes the validity of considering Dandolo family patronage as an important factor for the design of the Santa Chiara Polyptych.

The Santa Chiara Polyptych's ornamentation visualizes the relationship between the convent and Dandolo family patronage. As a translation of the bejeweled aesthetic of the Pala

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[498] Pincus, *Tombs of the Doges of Venice,* 106.
[499] Lermer, *Der gotische 'Dogenpalast,'* 264–265.
[500] Pincus, "The Doge and the Franciscans," 106.

d'Oro into the humbler medium of gilded wood, the Santa Chiara Polyptych makes Andrea

Dandolo's luxurious commissions at the center of the Venice's devotional life accessible to the

audiences of a cloistered community located on the outskirts of the city. Andrea Dandolo's

patronage projects at San Marco affirm the Dandolo family as core supporters of Venetian state

devotion. The pointed arches, detailed tracery, and foliate ornament that define the courtly

aesthetic of the adjacent Doge's Palace are also present in the aedicules, triforate arches, and

repeated archways of the wooden polyptych. The interplay of gold and blue enamel that defines

the Pala d'Oro, and the lost polychromy of the Doge's Palace are evoked in the blue paint added

to the recesses of the shell lunette and the foliate ornament crowning the arches. The shell lunette

is the strongest indication of the altarpiece's connection to the ornamental traditions of San

Marco. Pervasive since antiquity, the introduction of spolia from Constantinople following the

Fourth Crusade made this particular motif ubiquitous in the ornamentation of Venice's state

church.[501] On the northern façade, the twelfth-century Byzantine relief of an orant Virgin was

framed with architectural spolia of a shell lunette supported by Corinthian columns – one

example among many of the motif's appearance at the site (fig. 79).[502] In the early thirteenth-

century historiated columns erected over the high altar, the motif extends into the myriad small

niches that contain the scenes from the life of Christ.[503] The continued reappropriation of the

ancient motif and all of its associations is also found on Andrea Dandolo's own tomb in the

Baptistery – the last ducal burial at San Marco (fig. 80).[504] At the center of the tomb

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[501] Bacci, "Gothic-Framed Byzantine Icons," 106–115.

[502] Otto Demus, ed., *Le sculture esterne di San Marco* (Milan: Electa, 1995), 37–39, no. 19.

[503] A. Middeldorf Kosegarten, "Zur liturgischen Ausstattung von San Marco in Venedig im 13. Jahrhundert: Kanzeln und Altarziborien," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 29 (2002): 7–77, esp. 48–54.

[504] Pincus, "The Doge in the Divine Plan," 140–141.

sarcophagus, Virgin and Child are enthroned beneath a shell lunette. With this motif as its crowning element, the Santa Chiara Polyptych took part in the aesthetic of spoliation and Gothic ornamentation exercised in the environment of San Marco and the Doge's Palace. This visual correspondence had the potential to represent the institution's affiliation with the extended family of the enterprising scholar doge Andrea Dandolo and his prominent patronage campaigns. The designs created by Paolo Veneziano's workshop offered its original viewers within the setting of a cloistered community the opportunity to participate in the new courtly aesthetic that contributed to the design of Venice's most important civic monuments and devotional objects. Perceived at the nexus of architecture and small-scale devotional objects, the polyptych's complex ornamentation creates an experiential space in between these two categories of artistic production, where the apprehension of the order's sacred narratives is rendered more immediate.

Conclusion

This dissertation began by describing the display of early Italian painting at the National Gallery of Art in Washington to present the typical institutional view of Paolo Veneziano. Drawing on the legacy of the National Gallery's first curator and director, who was a protégé of Bernard Berenson,[505] the installation emphasizes the regional schools that have been central to the twentieth-century study of Italian art history. The Crucifixion scene that was originally a part of the Worcester triptych discussed in chapter one and the *Coronation of the Virgin* formerly attributed to Paolo Veneziano are juxtaposed with works by central Italian masters in the display, promoting the view that Venetian painting is a tradition distinct from developments that occurred elsewhere in Italy. The Santa Chiara Polyptych has been presented in these pages as a case study that offers new approaches to the art of Paolo Veneziano. Rather than considering the object in terms of broadly defined stylistic categories, the chapters of this dissertation have examined different aspects of the Santa Chiara Polyptych that characterize its relationship to the historical, cultural, and aesthetic conditions of fourteenth-century Venice. The contents of each chapter involve broad themes that present the Santa Chiara Polyptych in a new light. These themes include mendicant spirituality, the role of technique, and patronage.

Much of the twentieth-century scholarship on Italian altarpieces is concerned with object typologies.[506] The Santa Chiara Polyptych does not easily fit into the discipline's typological categories. Foregrounding the polyptych's provenance from a Franciscan institution offers an alternative approach to the object. To enhance the imaginative reflection on Biblical narratives

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[505] David Alan Brown, "Introduction," in *Italian Paintings of the Fifteenth Century,* XIII–XVII (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2003), XIV.

[506] Victor Schmidt, "Introduction," in *Italian Panel Painting of the Duecento and Trecento,* ed. Victor M. Schmidt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 12. Schmidt briefly discusses the role of typologies as a prominent concern in the twentieth-century scholarship.

encouraged in Franciscan devotional literature, artists developed new object types featuring series of narrative scenes. The range of objects discussed in the first chapter show how Paolo Veneziano responded to a regional tradition of objects created in response to mendicant devotional culture. Comparison to these objects makes it possible to conceive of the polyptych as more than a discordant borrowing of elements from the broadly defined typologies of the Gothic polyptych and the Byzantine vita icon.

The polyptych's relationship to the mendicant spiritual tradition connects the object, and Paolo Veneziano's art in general, to cultural developments that had a far-reaching impact throughout Europe. The iconographic details discussed in the second chapter attest to Paolo Veneziano and his patrons' familiarity with contemporary devotional literature. The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* is a cogent example of this literary tradition. The survival of two hundred manuscript copies of the *Meditations* in English, German, French, and Latin is evidence of the text's popularity. In the text, the author cites a passage from Bernard of Clairvaux's sermon on the Song of Songs that uses the imagery of clothing woven with gold and silver thread to represent God's majesty. Paolo Veneziano represented this image with elaborate detail in the Santa Chiara Polyptych. The artist used a variety of complex techniques to depict the pattern designs in the Santa Chiara Polyptych and other examples of the subject, such as the *Coronation of the Virgin* in The Frick Collection. His use of processes more frequently associated with central Italian masters, such as sgraffito, has only recently been recognized in the literature. Scrutiny of Paolo's techniques is therefore a means to integrate his art with painting practices used elsewhere in Italy.

The subject of colorful silks woven with gold and silver thread also connects Paolo Veneziano's representations with socioeconomic factors that had a global reach in the

fourteenth-century. Patterned silks produced in Asia and Italy were an important commodity in the trade networks that were the basis of Venice's wealth. Evidence from elite burials across Europe as well as accounts of ceremonial occasions demonstrate that the textiles represented in the central panel of the Santa Chiara Polyptych had a ubiquitous appeal. Rather than Byzantine style chrysography, patterned silks that closely approximated the contemporary production were the distinguishing feature of Paolo's paintings of holy figures. Emphasizing this aspect of his production positions his art as a mirror for the devotional and material cultures of his age. The textiles depicted in the central panel unite the representation with the broadly diffused European taste for *nassic* style textiles.

Foregrounding the circumstances of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's patronage is another means to integrate the object's design and ornamentation with aesthetic trends beyond the framework of Venice and its Byzantine legacy. The date range proposed for the Santa Chiara Polyptych, 1333–1345, included Andrea Dandolo's renovation projects at the Venetian state church of San Marco. The period also witnessed the expansion of the Doge's Palace in a Gothic architectural style. Paolo Veneziano and his sons contributed to the renovation projects at San Marco with the Pala Feriale. As demonstrated in the second chapter of this dissertation, other members of the Dandolo family were active as patrons at the convent of Santa Chiara in 1340 and 1344, and the institution may also have been led by a member of the family during this time.

Andrea Dandolo's commissions for the high altar of San Marco featured a modernizing aesthetic of Gothic ornament. The Santa Chiara Polyptych's frame features the same ornamental vocabulary. In light of the Dandolo family's contemporary patronage at both the convent of Santa Chiara and the state church of San Marco, the insistently Gothic frame connects the altarpiece to the latest artistic developments at the city's most important devotional site.

Commissioning the artist who had enjoyed ducal patronage since at least 1339 was an opportunity for the Dandolo family members involved at Santa Chiara to show their allegiance with the city's rulers. The visual language of this allegiance was the Gothic ornamental style favored in courtly centers throughout Europe.

The intersection of patronage and the ornamental design of the microarchitectural frame makes it possible to approach the polyptych from a new interpretive angle. The figure kneeling at the foot of Saint Francis's funeral bier is clothed like a laywoman (fig. 39). As suggested in the second chapter, she may be Maria Dandolo, who left all her holdings to the convent at her death in 1340. Reconstructions of fourteenth-century choir screens make it possible to interpret the Santa Chiara Polyptych as an analogy for these structures that played a prominent role in the experience of mendicant church interiors. Likely displayed in a privately funded chapel beneath an arcade in a monumental dividing structure, the Santa Chiara Polyptych mediates the laity's relationship to the institution. It presents a visual program of meditation on the majesty of Christ and the Virgin, which can be realized in the world by following the example of Francis, Clare, the Virgin, and Christ.

Providing a fuller account of Paolo Veneziano's response to mendicant spirituality, the techniques he used, and his proximity to Dandolo family patronage liberates the Santa Chiara Polyptych from the rigid categories in which it has previously been understood. While details in Paolo Veneziano's oeuvre indeed represent his engagement with the Byzantine tradition, this was not a phenomenon that was unique to Paolo in the landscape of fourteenth-century Italian art. As important as Byzantine spolia and pictorial styles were to Venetian art in the century following the Fourth Crusade, the additions to the Pala d'Oro commissioned by Andrea Dandolo and the expansion of the Doge's Palace represent the local enthusiasm for northern European art.

The ornamental frame of the Santa Chiara Polyptych shows that this tradition was also of interest to the patron who commissioned it for the convent. Paolo Veneziano's workshop was at the vanguard of local artistic production. Especially by focusing on the Santa Chiara Polyptych's Gothic microarchitectural frame and its correspondences with contemporary developments in goldwork and architecture, today's viewers may be able to see Paolo Veneziano's objects from the same standpoint as the historical viewer Oliviero Forzetta, who noted the workshop's tendency to make objects in the manner of "a certain Teutonic friar," who, "in fact, some time ago did works of that sort in Venice."

Epilogue

While the twentieth-century scholarship for the most part did not recognize the importance of the Santa Chiara Polyptych's framing elements as a central constitutive part of the work, art restorers exerted their own interpretations at a material level. At some point in the nineteenth century, two bands of dentil, or billet molding were added to the structure of the frame as reinforcements on either side of the central panel.[507] More information about when this element was added is likely to be revealed by the restoration efforts that are currently underway. The addition of the billet molding was an appropriate choice, as it was the standard ornamental device for framing windows, doorways, and architectural fragments in fourteenth-century Venice. An early thirteenth-century example is found surrounding the ground floor windows of the Ca' Loredan on the Grand Canal.[508] The device is encountered in many of the comparative examples discussed throughout this dissertation, including the relief of the orant Virgin on the northwest façade of San Marco. On the southeastern canalside façade of the Doge's palace, the motif performs a communicative function. Just beyond the relief carving of the imprudent son Cam, a single band of billet molding signals the termination of the building's iconographic program. It separates the heavily ornamented ensemble of the arch that terminates the loggia from the expanse of unadorned wall beyond. The foundational Venetian interpreter John Ruskin effused over billet molding in *The Stones of Venice.* He introduced the poetic idea that the

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[507] Roberto Saccuman, email message to author, July 11th, 2021.
[508] A prestigious early thirteenth-century example is found in the Ca' Loredan on the Grand Canal, Deborah Howard, *Venice & the East: the Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100-1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 148.

motif's multiplicity of planar surfaces was ideally suited to Venice for its potential to reflect light off the surfaces of the canals at all times of day.[509]

Like Ruskin's conclusion, the addition of the billet molding is a hopeful fantasy, even though there are numerous historical precedents that attest to its apparent accuracy. While twentieth-century scholars hesitated to interpret the Santa Chiara Polyptych's frame, restorers were significantly less reticent. Historical photographs in the files of the Accademia show how the polyptych was displayed prior to the conservation undertaken for the new installation of the galleries following the Second World War (fig. 81). It was not until Raimond van Marle's scholarship in the early 1920s that the Santa Chiara Polyptych was correctly reconstructed. Prior to Van Marle's recognition of the correct central panel, which had been displayed in Milan's Pinacoteca di Brera since its consignment there by the Napoleonic administrator Pietro Edwards,[510] the Venetian polyptych was completed by an incongruously small *Coronation of the Virgin* by Stefano da Sant' Agnese. This panel was integrated with the surrounding polyptych by a border of tracery medallions.

The imaginative nineteenth-century restorer was at his boldest with his response to the problem of the missing central panels that belong in the space between the prophets David and Isaiah. For this space a detailed triangular pediment was developed. Dramatic fleurons adapted from those that crown the gables of the Franciscan scenes curve outwards from the central pediment. Its center is consumed by a detailed rose window. This ornamental device is in fact distracting, along the lines of Van Os's complaint about the Santa Chiara Polyptych's frame. While its removal allows for a more accurate view of the polyptych, it represents an interesting

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[509] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice,* vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1907), 272–74.
[510] Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano,* 150.

passage in the object's history. It affirms the importance of carved framing elements as a distinguishing feature of Venetian polyptychs. Before the more recent scholarship began to integrate the ornamental frames into consideration of the work's meaning, interpretation of this aspect of the work happened on a material level, in the hands of restorers whose names do not appear on the title pages of scholarly publications. In response to the more recent tradition of scholarship cited in the pages of this dissertation, the analyses presented in its chapters are intended to offer new ways to access the altarpiece's subjects. With conservation treatments currently underway, we await the next era of responses to the work of Paolo Veneziano.

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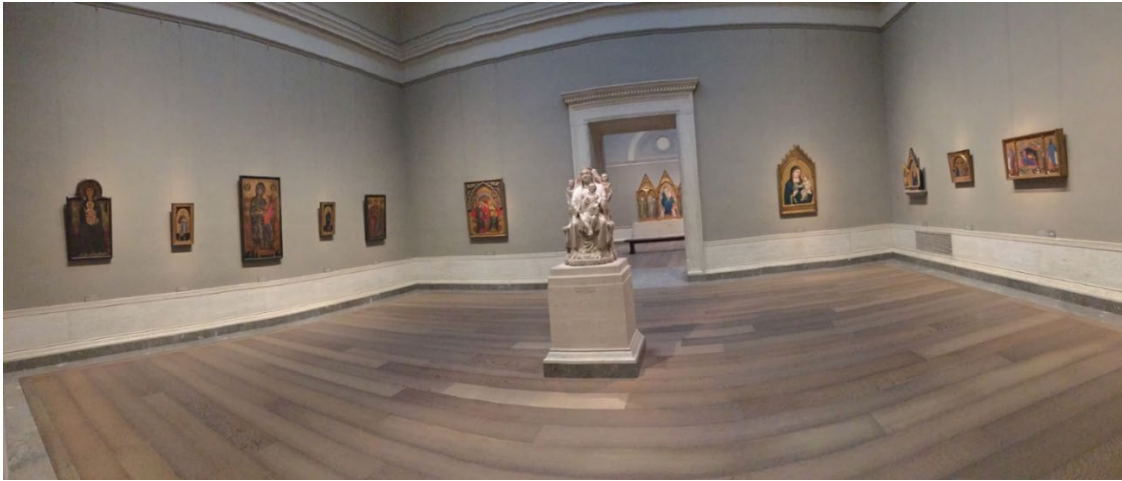
Figures

Fig. 1. Gallery 1, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, photo Barbara Berrie

Fig. 2. Master of the Washington Coronation, *Coronation of the Virgin,* 1324, tempera and gold on panel, 45 3/8 x 33 7/8 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection (1952.5.87), image courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington
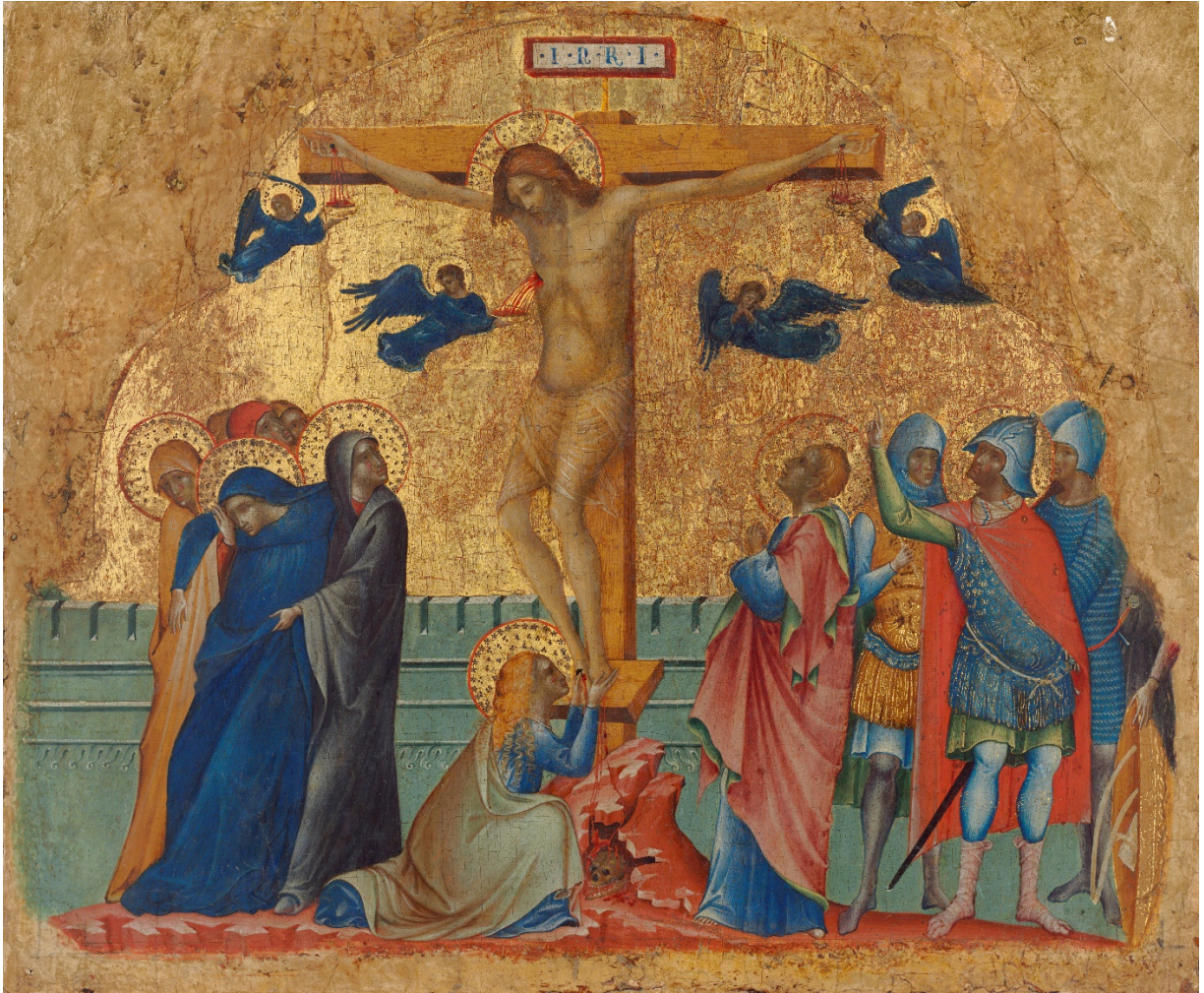
Fig. 3. Paolo Veneziano, *Crucifixion,* ca. 1340–5, tempera and gold on panel, 13 5/16 x 16 3/16 in., National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection (1939.1.143), image courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

Fig. 4. Paolo Veneziano, *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* ca. 1333–45, tempera and gold on panel, 50 1/4 x 112 5/8 in., Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (no. 21), © G.A.VE-Archivio Fotografico, photo Matteo de Fina, with permission from the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo-Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia

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Fig. 5. Master of the Santa Chiara Triptych (central panel) and Paolo Veneziano (wings), *Santa Chiara triptych,* central panel ca. 1300–1310, wings ca. 1320, central panel 52 3/8 x 43 1/4 in., tempera and gold on panel, Museo Civico Sartorio, Trieste, exterior of wings shown to the left and right

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Fig. 7. Paolo Veneziano, *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Donors,* ca. 1330s, tempera and gold on panel, 55 7/8 x 35 ½ in., Gallerie dell' Accademia, Venice (no. 786)

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Fig. 9. Paolo Veneziano, San Giacomo Maggiore polyptych, ca. 1350, tempera and gold on panel, 56 x 111 in., Basilica di San Giacmomo Maggiore, Bologna

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Fig. 11. Paolo Veneziano, *Dormition of the Virgin,* 1333, tempera and gold on panel, central panel 30 1/4 x 44 1/8 in., lateral panels 35 1/8 x 9 1/8 in., Musei Civici di Vicenza (A 157), with permission of the Musei Civici di Vicenza

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Fig. 12. Early fourteenth-century Venetian, donor figures attributed to Paolo Veneziano, *San Donato,* 1310, carved wood relief (likely repainted), donor figures in tempera on panel, 79 1/8 x 56 5/16 in., Museo Diocesano, Venice, formerly cathedral of Murano

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Fig. 13. Jean d'Orleans, *Parement de Narbonne,* with detail below, late fourteenth century, tempera on silk, 30 1/8 x 112 3/16, Musée du Louvre, Paris (MI 1121, recto)

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Fig. 15. Paolo Veneziano, *Virgin and Child with Saints Francis and Elizabeth of Hungary, Presenting the Doge Francesco Dandolo and His Wife Elisabetta Contarini,* 1339, tempera and gold on panel, 57 1/8 x 87 7/8 in. Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice

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Fig. 16. Giovanni Grevembroch, *Monumenta Veneta,* 1754, illustration of tomb of Francesco Dandolo, 1339

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Fig. 17. *Santa Chiara triptych,* Museo Civico Sartorio, Trieste, detail, (left to right), Dormition of the Virgin, Death of Saint Clare, Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata

Fig. 18. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* Gallerie dell' Accademia, Venice, detail, Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata, © G.A.VE-Archivio Fotografico, photo Matteo de Fina, with permission from the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo-Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia

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Fig. 19. Unknown Venetian artist, *Scenes in the Life of Christ and the Virgin with Standing Saints,* ca. 1300, tempera and gold on panel, 16 3/8 x 26 3/8 in., The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena (F.1965.1.020P)

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Fig. 21. Paolo Veneziano, *Seven Saints,* tempera and gold on panel, Magdalen panel 10 7/8 x 7 1/8 in., all other panels11 1/8 x 3 1/2 in., Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts (1927.19.1–7)

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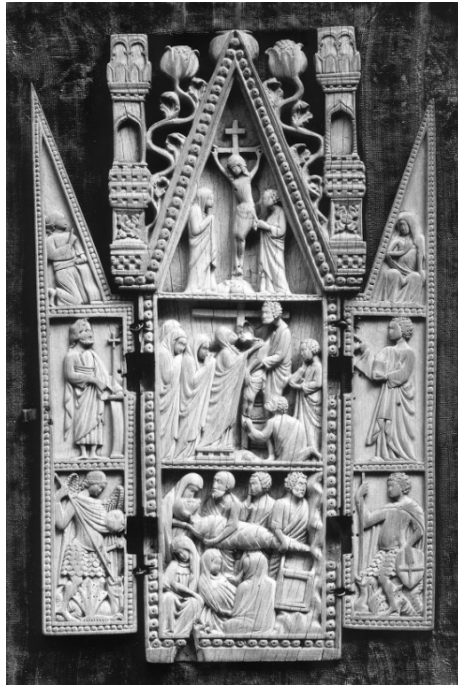
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Fig. 27. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* Gallerie dell'Accademia, detail, central panel with Coronation of the Virgin, © G.A.VE-Archivio Fotografico, photo Matteo de Fina, with permission from the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo-Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia (same image credit applies to all subsequent details from the Santa Chiara Polyptych)

Fig. 28. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* Gallerie dell'Accademia, detail, Nativity

Fig. 29. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* Gallerie dell'Accademia, detail, Baptism

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Fig. 31. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* Gallerie dell'Accademia, detail, Betrayal of Christ

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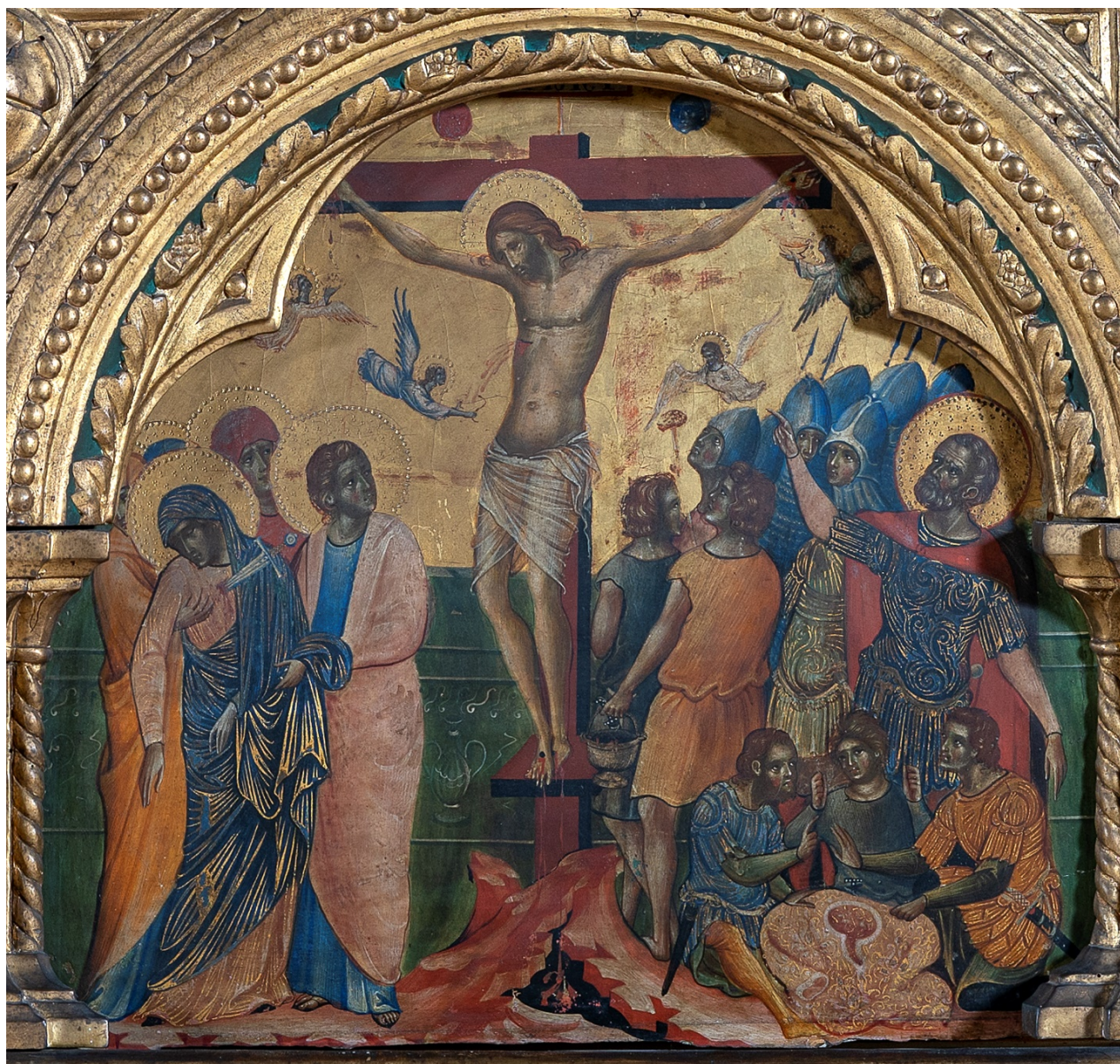
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Fig. 36. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* Gallerie dell'Accademia, detail, Pentecost

Fig. 37. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* detail, Investiture of Saint Clare

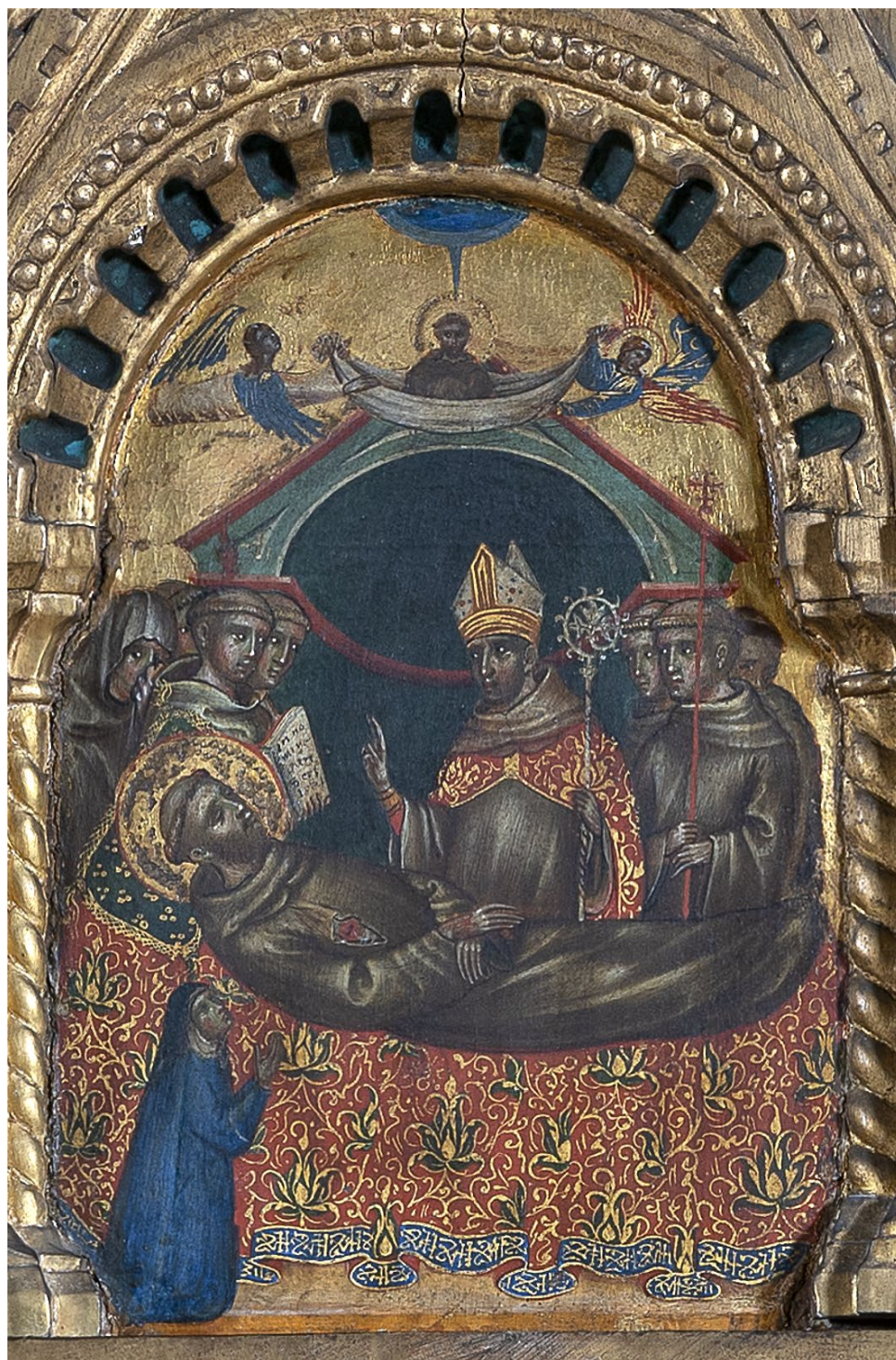Fig. 38. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* detail, Renunciation of Saint Fracis

Fig. 39. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* detail, Death and Canonization of Saint Francis

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Fig. 40. Giotto, *Renunciation of Saint Francis,* c. 1290–96, fresco, Upper Church, Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi

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Fig. 42. Giotto, *Verification of the Stigmata,* c. 1290–96, fresco, Upper Church, Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi

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Fig. 43. Left: *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* detail of donor figure; right: *Virgin and Child with Donors,* Gallerie dell'Accademia, detail, donor figures

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Fig. 45. Italian, *Lampas with Gold Thread,* 14th-century, silk, metal thread, 12 3/8 x 11 ¾ in. , Deutsches Textilmuseum, Krefeld (03494)

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Fig. 49. Northern China, Mongol Period, *Brocade with Lotus Flowers,* thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century, tabby silk with gold thread, 23 26 3/8 in., The Cleveland Museum of Art (1994.293), digital image courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Program

Fig. 50. Probably Iran, *Lampas with Scrolling Vines and Grape Leaves,* thirteenth century, lampas weave silk with metal thread, 8 1/2 x 9 1/4 in., The Cleveland Museum of Art (1926.509), digital image courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Program

Fig. 51. Paolo and Giovanni Veneziano, *Coronation of the Virgin,* The Frick Collection, New York, detail, cloth of honor, Copyright The Frick Collection

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Fig. 52. Left: Paolo Veneziano, *Virgin and Child,* ca. 1345, tempera and gold on panel, 43 5/8 x 24 3/8 in., The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena (F.1973.24.P); right: Paolo Veneziano, *Saint Lucy polyptych,* detail, with permission of the Diocese of Krk, Croatia

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Fig. 53. Left: Chinese, Yuan Dynasty, *Khubilai Khan's Consort, Chabi,* late thirteenth century, ink and color on silk, 24 x 18 3/4 in., National Palace Museum, Taipei; right: Chinese, Yuan Dynasty, *Consort of Emperor Wuzong,* fourteenth century, ink and color on silk, 30 x 22 5/8 in., National Palace Museum, Taipei

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Fig. 54. *Dalmatic,* presented by Benedict XI to San Domenico in Perugia, composed of fabrics dating from late thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century, central Asian gold-brocaded lampas, blue silk fabric from Lucca

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Fig. 55. Lampas weave textiles from the tomb of Cangrande della Scala; left: fragment from red outer mantle; right: fragment of inner garment with gold palmettes on a blue ground

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Fig. 56. Left: reconstruction of the grave goods of Cangrande della Scala by Giorgio Sangiorgi, drawing by O. Marozzi; right: reconstruction of mantle from grave goods of Cangrande della Scala by Anna Passerella, 2004

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Fig. 57. Two pages from Jacopo Bellini's Louvre sketchbook, left: 14th-century ink drawings, drawn over with metalpoint by Jacopo Bellini, 14 15/16 in x 10 1/4 in., Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques (RF 1539,90); right: 14th-century ink drawings, with marking in metalpoint by Jacopo Bellini, 14 15/16 in x 10 1/4 in., Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques (RF 1540,91)

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Fig. 58. Textile design from Jacopo Bellini's Louvre sketchbook, second half of the fourteenth century, ink on parchment, 14 15/16 in x 10 1/4 in., Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques (RF 1556,88)

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Fig. 59. Left: Italian, sheet with textile designs, second half of the fourteeth century, ink on parchment, 10 9/16 x 7 9/16 in., Harvard Art Museums (1932.291); right: Italian, sheet with textile designs, second half of the fourteenth century, ink on parchment, 11 9/16 x 7 15/16, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett (KdZ 485)

Fig. 60. Santa Chiara Polyptych as it was displayed in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, 1951–2019, photo Grazina Subelyte

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Fig. 61. Giotto, *Crib at Greccio,* c. 1290–96, fresco, Upper Church, Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi

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Fig. 62. Reconstruction of the choir screen of Santa Croce, Florence, published in Marcia Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconstructed," *The Art Bulletin* 56, 3 (1974): 325341, fig. 16

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Fig. 63. Reconstruction of the choir screen of San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna, published in Fabio Massaccesi, "Il 'corridore' della chiesa agostiniana di San Giacomo Maggiore a Bologna: prime ipotesi ricostruttive," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 77 (2014): 1–26, fig. 9
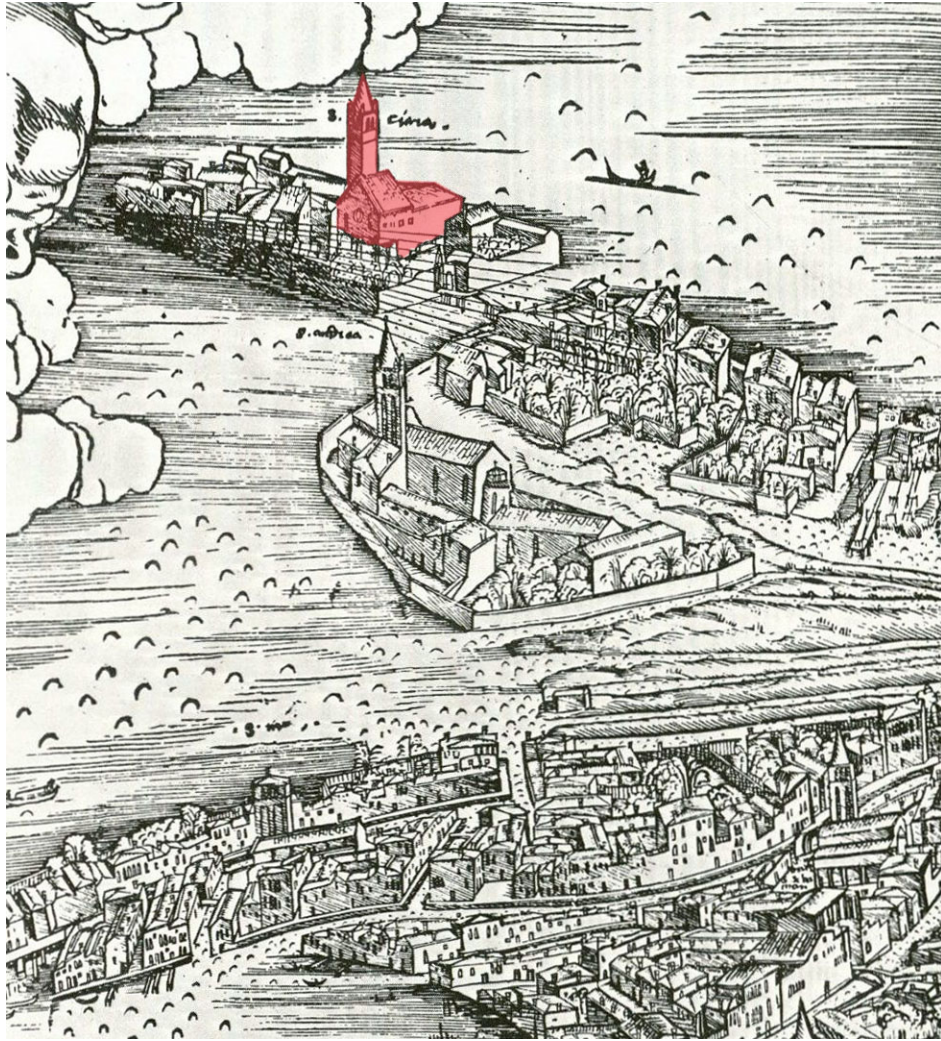
Fig. 64. Jacopo de' Barbari, *View of Venice,* 1500, woodcut, comprised of six sheets, each measuring 52 1/4 x 109 1/4 in., Minneapolis Institute of Art; the John R. Van Derlip Fund (2010.88), detail showing church of Santa Chiara highlighted in red, image courtesy the Minneapolist Institute of Art's Open Access Program

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Fig. 65. Vittore Carpaccio, *The Vision of Prior Ottobon in Sant' Antonio di Castello,* ca. 1515, oil on canvas, Gallerie dell' Accademia, Venice (cat. no. 91)

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Fig. 66. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* detail, scenes from the Life of Christ with frames removed

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Fig. 67. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* viewed from behind in Misericordia Conservation Lab, Venice

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Fig. 68. Giovanni Bonesegna and unidentified goldsmiths (14th-century goldwork frames), *Pala d'Oro,* 10–12th-century Byzantine enamels, 14th-century Venetian goldwork, pearls, and gemstones, 6 x 9 ft, Basilica of San Marco, Venice

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Fig. 69. Paolo, Luca, and Giovanni Veneziano, *Pala Feriale,* 1345, tempera and gold on panel, two panels, each 23 1/4 x 127 15/16 in., Museo di San Marco, Venice

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Fig. 70. Doge's Palace, southwest corner, 1342–48

Fig. 71. Doge's Palace, southwest corner, details of Adam and Eve, 1342–48

Fig. 72. Doge's Palace, southeast corner, detail of the Drunkenness of Noah, 1342–48

Fig. 73. Doge's Palace, eastern facade, terminus of loggia with Noah's sons Shem, Japhet, and Ham, 1342–48, photo Mattia Zabeo and Michele Fosco

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Fig. 74. Basilica of San Marco, 11th-century narthex portal with early fourteenth-century Gothic tracery

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Fig. 75. Early twelfth-century portal, Corta Seconda del Milion, Venice

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Fig. 76. Byzantine and Italian Goldsmiths, *Reliquary of the Arm of St. George,* gilded silver, enamels, twelfth-century silver reliquary, fourteenth-century revetment with sixteenth-century additions, Treasury, Basilica of San Marco, Venice

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Fig. 77. Byzantine and Italian goldsmiths, *Pala d'Oro,* details; left: original twelfth-century enamel plaque of the Prophet Solomon; right: plaque with fourteenth-century frame commissioned by Andrea Dandolo

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Fig. 78. French goldsmiths, *Basin Portable Shrine,* 1320-1340, gilded silver, translucent enamel, pearls and gems, 10 1/4 x 4 3/4 in., The Morgan Library and Museum, New York (AZ005)

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Fig. 79. Byzantine, *Orant Virgin,* twelfth century, restored between 1761 and 1852, Greek marble, 41 3/4 x 19 3/4 in., Basilica of San Marco, northwestern façade, Venice

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Fig. 80. Giovanni Grevembroch, *Monumenta Veneta,* 1754, illustration of Tomb of Andrea Dandolo, 1354, Baptistery, Basilica of San Marco, Venice

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Fig. 81. *Santa Chiara Polyptych,* before mid-twentieth-century restoration