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Abb. 3. Meo da Siena, Christ and Apostles

Frankfurt, Städel-Museum

NOTES ON TUSCAN PAINTERS OF THE TRECENTO IN THE STÄDEL INSTITUT AT FRANKFURT

BY

B. BERENSON

The Städel Institut at Frankfurt possesses a number of works by minor masters of the Tuscan Trecento. Although several have already been published, a systematic account of all of them will scarcely come amiss. It will serve for reference, or help to make them a subject of discourse.

The earliest are two panels, *Fig. 3* and *4*, dated 1333 that must have served as predelle to the front or back of some altarpiece. Curt Weigelt correctly ascribed them to Meo of Siena¹⁾.

In one of the panels Our Lord sits enthroned under a treffe arch between the twelve disciples each of whom stand under a similar arch. In the other Our Lady also sits similarly with angels in attendance, and the donor, a monk, at her feet. To right and left stand twelve saints each under a treffe arch. Peter returns, but here as Pope, and the other Pope is probably Gregory. It is easy to identify Paul and the Baptist, Stephen and probably Lawrence. The others remain for me anonymous. In the spandrils between the arches busts of angels appear in the predella with Our Lord, and busts of prophets and sibyls in the one of Our Lady. Except David, strumming on a kind of harp, the others are busy unfurling, or reading, or expounding scrolls. As in so many Medieval works of art, these scrolls are inscribed, not with legible letters in Hebrew, Greek or Latin, but with an ornamental script imitated possibly from the Cufic.

The physiognomy of the figures is amiably imbecile. The bodies are ill proportioned and undersized. The action and gestures remind one of marionettes fashioned by a ploughman in rare moments of leisure. The Christ Child is distinguished by a pose as affected and silly as in most of the Southern Indian bronzes that are now being imposed upon our patience. Yet it cannot in justice be said that the spiritual significance of these sacred beings is much below the average of Medieval Italian art, the masterpieces of the ten or twelve creators always excepted.

¹⁾ See *Alcuni dipinti di Meo da Siena non ancora riconosciuti. Rassegna d'Arte Senese* V. 101—105. The date and inscription on the step of the Virgin's throne *ibid.*, p. 103. Sizes 59.5 by 3.04, and 60 by 3.017. The Inventory numbers are 1201 and 1202.

If the begetter of these paper dolls is not distinguished by depth of feeling or intellect, neither does he retrieve himself by any merits as a painter. His technique is embarrassed, his modelling blurred, his colouring hot.

And yet I enjoy these decalcomanias! They appeal to something invincibly puerile in my nature. And one may confess to liking them, and will only be admired for it, whereas we should be laughed at, to say the least, if we admitted caring for dolls, toys or children's tales not a whit more babyish.

I not only enjoy them, but I am shameless enough to display an interest in their painter, and his relation to the rest of Italian art: I know it is an infantile pursuit, demanding the least possible expenditure of intellect or scholarship, and exercising little but memory and the ability to recognize stereotyped shapes. For it may be stated as an axiom that the obscurer the artist, the more mannered he will be, and the more mannered he is, the easier to recognize, no matter whom he is copying or imitating. Even a tyro in connoisseurship can scarcely miss flattering results in such a pursuit, particularly as the first steps do at times bear a vague resemblance to a real effort.

But here this initial effort has, in fact, already been made. Curt Weigelt, in ascribing these two predelle at Frankfurt, as well as the Triptych in the Cathedral of Perugia, to the painter who signs Meo da Siena in a polyptych in the gallery of the same town, gives us three points in this minimal artist's career, which enable us to reconstruct his tiny personality.

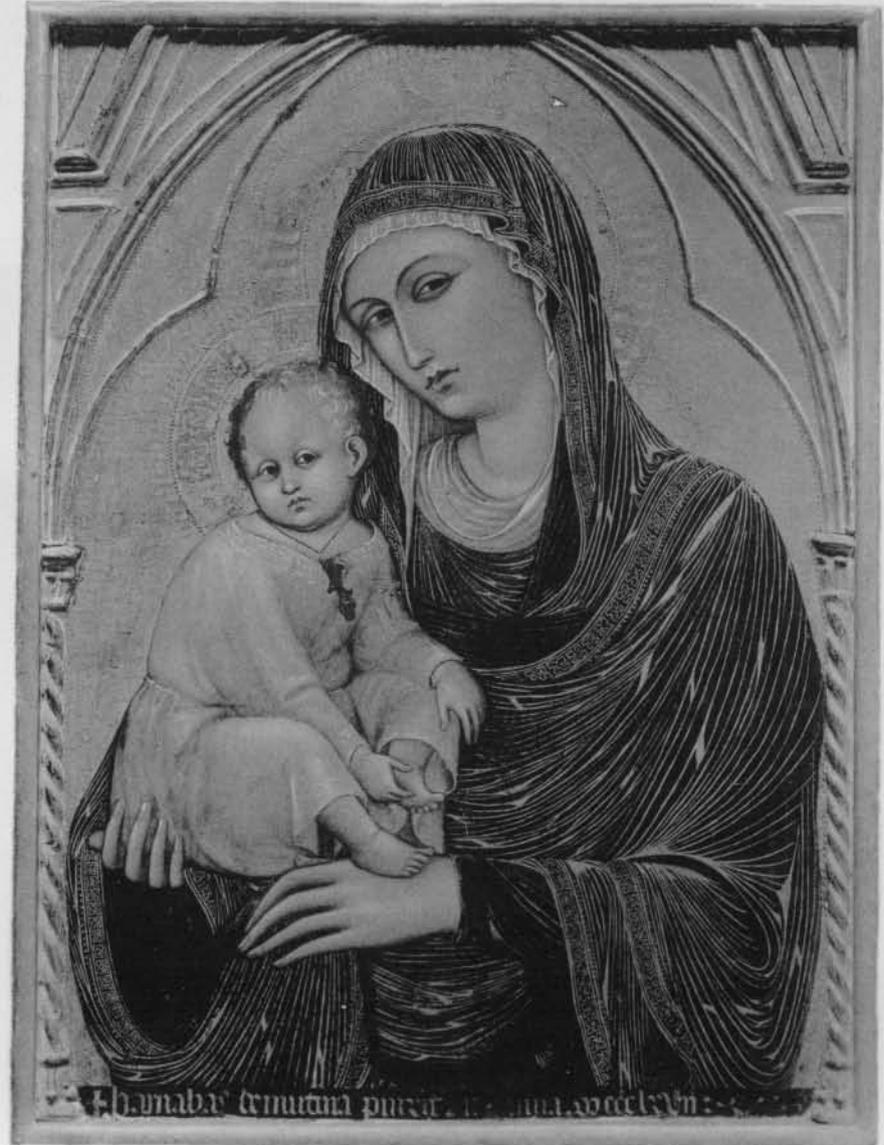
Meo, who seems to have worked in or near Perugia from some time before 1319 to the date of his death, between 1333 and 1334, shows in his signed work that he must have learned his trade under Duccio of Siena, or under one of that master's followers. That signed work already exhales a certain provincial torpor, as if its painter had been away for some time from the refining and sustaining criticism of an art centre. Not only that, but worse. The crude modelling and the hot colouring betray the influence of his Bolognese contemporaries¹⁾. The Cathedral triptych at Perugia, the Madonna first attributed to him by Irene Vavasour-Elder (Perugia Gallery, no. 10 Rassegna d'Arte Senese V. p. 66), and the Madonna with the Baptist and three other Saints, all in half length, in the same collection, show him drawing closer to the Siense, as if he had revisited his native town. But in the Frankfurt predella which, as it is dated 1333, must have been one of his last achievements, he drops back to quaintness and rusticity²⁾.

Before dismissing him, I wish to say that I doubt whether he was greatly inferior to the ruck of Duccio's followers. There is always an abyss between the genius and the imitators. Those who stayed on at Siena had the advantage of their master's presence and the stimulus of their more gifted fellow-pupils. Segna, in long exile, or even Ugolino, would perhaps have ended no better than Meo.

The painting next in date at the Städel Gallery is a small panel, *Pl. Va*, representing the Madonna with Peter, Paul, the Baptist, three other Saints, as well as angels, and two donors, and is by

¹⁾ Perhaps the faces too, which would account for the attribution made by Weigelt to Meo of a Madonna embracing the Child, with small heads of saints in the frame, at S. Maria Maggiore, Florence, which is Bolognese. (Photo. Alinari 20425.)

²⁾ Unimportant though Meo was, he yet inspired not only the painter of the Presentation and Adoration of the Perugia Gallery (nos. 76 and 81), the author of the fragments of frescoes in the same collection, representing the story of the Passion (Photo. Anderson 15585—6), but of the cycle of subjects in distant Subiaco which recount the Joys and Sorrows of our Lady (Photo. Alinari 26220—33, 26252—59).



a) Jacopo del Casentino: Madonna, Saints and Angels, b) Barnaba da Modena: Madonna
Frankfurt a. Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut



Abb. 4. Meo da Siena, Madonna and Saints

Frankfurt, Städel-Museum

Jacopo del Casentino¹⁾. Prof. Richard Offner has been at the pains of reconstructing the little figure of this artist with pious industry²⁾ and no little acumen. Nobody should question Prof. Offner's easy mastery of his subject, and in any dispute over what is and what is not to be ascribed to Jacopo del Casentino I would follow Prof. Offner blindfold. Thus I am entirely with him against Dr. Van Marle, who, in his encyclopædic work on the Italian Schools of Painting (vol. III, 654), questions the attribution of our small picture to Jacopo himself, and would assign it to yet another painter "one who shows a close connection to Jacopo del Casentino with whom however he cannot be identified."

I am afraid I have no higher opinion of Jacopo del Casentino than I have of Meo da Siena. Indeed both seem tarred with the same brush, namely Bolognese smudginess of contour, and hotness of colour. Did Jacopo acquire them in his earliest years from some itinerant dauber who had wound his way over the mountains from the city of sausages and sages to the valley spreading under La Verna? Or did he derive it from Meo? Certain ornamental patterns in haloes and elsewhere, common to both, would make the latter notion, if dates permit, the more likely. At Florence he came under superior influences, under the influence particularly of the ablest of Giotto's disciples whose name has come down, of the closest Tuscan follower moreover of the pure French style known as Gothic, I mean Bernardo Daddi. Daddi was endowed with an almost Raphaelesque facility as well as felicity, not unusual at a moment when a formula has become conscious of all its intentions and mistress of all its means. In Giotto's absence he must easily have been the prince among painters at Florence. The younger natives, like the Orcagnas, were his pupils, and strangers must have flocked to his studio. No wonder that rustic Jacopo attached himself to his train.

Hundreds of small triptychs were evidently turned out of Bernardo's workshop, gem-like in colour, exquisite in line, refined in feeling, redolent of Chivalry. These wandered far, were sold in quantities at the fairs of Champagne, and became carriers of Tuscan art to the entire North.

Jacopo tried to do these also, and had a certain vogue, for among the paintings restored to him by Prof. Offner, the majority still are, or originally were, such triptychs, and several exist unnoticed by Prof. Offner. Yet smudgy, sooty, hot Jacopo was not the artist for this kind of daintiness.

The mention of Bologna in connection with both Meo da Siena and Jacopo del Casentino reminds me that although Frankfurt boasts no specimen of its Trecento painting — it is quite well off with-

¹⁾ Inv. No. 841 H. 51 cm, W. 29 cm.

²⁾ Jacopo del Casentino: Integrazione della sua Opera. Bolletino d'Arte del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione. Dec. 1923.

out! — it owns a Madonna by Barnabà of the neighbour town Modena¹⁾, *Pl. Vb*, signed and dated 1367.

It is true that this essay is concerned with Tuscan artists only, and Barnabà was anything but a Tuscan. His chief interest is that he remains so late into the 14th century imperturbably Byzantine. His frame-maker has taken up with Gothic fashions; but not he, least of all in his technique, which might be of a painter working at the same moment in the Cyclades or Sporades.

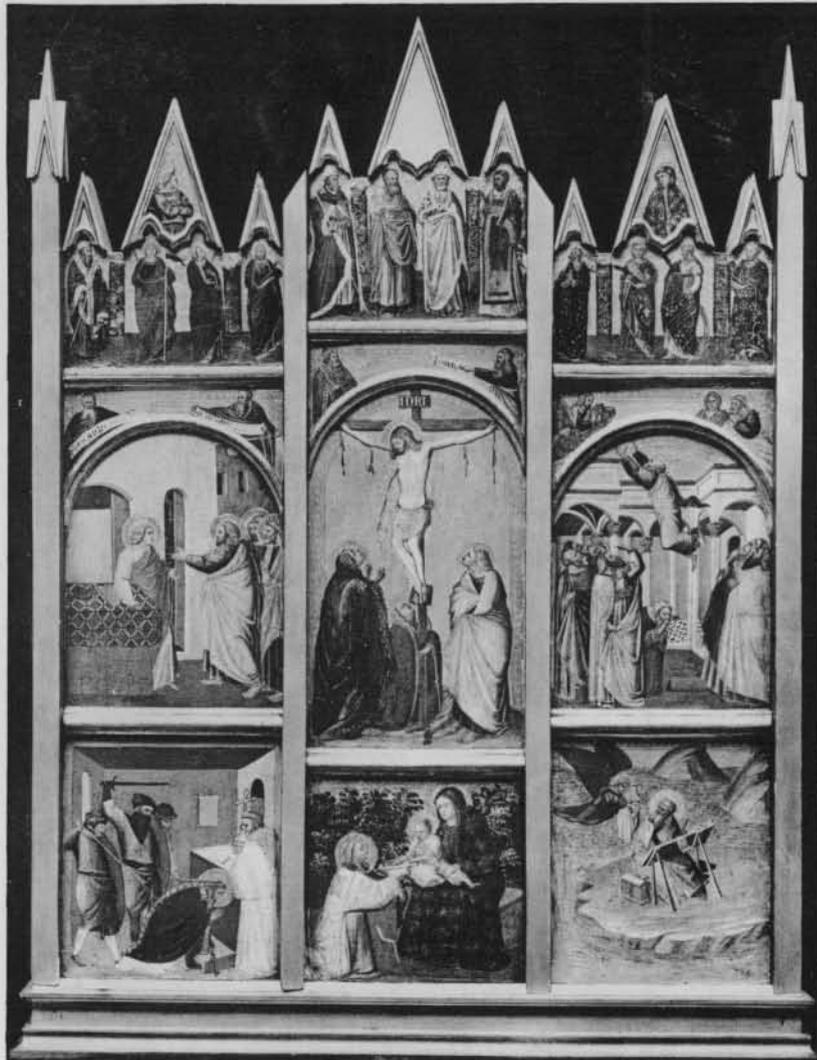
His range is limited, but he is a good honest workman with far more sense of craft than a Meo or a Jacopo del Casentino. He reminds me of Sano di Pietro of Siena, of whom he is a Trecento and rather better version. Yet the three painters I have mentioned are constantly praised, studied and commented. Sano is in full enjoyment of a cult particularly among Anglo-Saxon maiden ladies, which psychoanalysts might profitably explore. Barnabà remains unappreciated. Perhaps the reason is simply that instead of there being a sweet-shop full of him in a paradise of delights like Siena, praised, sung, apostrophized, anatomized, catalogued etc. etc. by most of the tourists of the last thirty years, Barnabà is scarcely represented in Modena, and Modena is a straggling village of cold brick barracks where there is a great deal to see but little to cheer and nothing to charm.

Moreover — besides the initial error of not belonging to a major or even minor hill-town of Tuscany or Umbria — Barnabà committed the sin of signing and dating most of his pictures. For this there can be no forgiveness from the students of art history. A painter who not only signs but dates is a *guastamestiere* who leaves nothing for the art critic to do except criticize. He is handed over to silence and oblivion.

Barnabà by the way owes nothing to the Sieneese. Like Duccio himself, he inherits directly from the Byzantine succession. And this is equally true of most Italian painters out of Tuscany. Sieneese influence may be more readily felt in France or Spain than in Liguria, Lombardy, Emilia or Venetia.

For students who are not mere antiquarians and embellishers of the parish pump, for people to whom the occupation with the art of former ages is not a mere pass-time, there is only one reason for giving serious attention to the minor and minimost artists of a school. It is to teach us to distinguish clearly between their work and that of their betters, and eventually to enable us to judge how bad a given work has to be before we refuse to credit it to a great master. Even without such passionately devoted and microscopic attention as has been directed for a generation upon the Sieneese, it is possible now to find considerable agreement as to whether a picture comes from the mind, if not from the hand as well, of the more renowned Quattrocento or Cinquecento masters of Tuscany, Umbria or Venice. It is far more difficult in the case of nearly all the Trecentisti and particularly so of the Sieneese. Take the Lorenzettis for example. They have tremendous ups and downs, such as we see in Pietro's works at Assisi which make it unsafe to declare that a given picture, even of poor quality but having their sense of the universe, or their formula for design, is necessarily inferior to their more careless moments. This is rendered more difficult still by the fact that they had followers who caught their spirit to perfection, and their calligraphy and technique surprisingly well. The result is that there is no other school of painting where it is so hard to make convincing attributions.

¹⁾ Inv. No. 807, 1.14 m by 76 cm on wood.



a) School of Pietro Lorenzetti: Small Polyptych, b) School of Ambrogio Lorenzetti: Crucifixion and Nativity
Frankfurt a. M., Städelsches Kunstinstitut

A case in point is afforded by two small polyptychs at Frankfurt, *Pl. VI a and b*.

One contains a Crucifixion for principal subject¹⁾. Below it Our Lady sits in a garden, the Hortus Conclusus, and at her feet kneels a young deacon who offers to the Infant Jesus something in a bowl. It would seem as if this bowl contained stones, in which case the youthful deacon would be Stephen, and the stones the instruments of his martyrdom. On our right we see, beginning below in good Byzantine and early Christian fashion, and preceding upwards, John the Evangelist sitting as if on an iceberg, interrupted in his writing by an angel who offers him a jug. Above we behold the Ascension of the same Saint: on our left we see, above, the calling of Matthew portrayed dramatically and composed in a way to suggest a monumental wall painting, and below the same Saint done to death at the altar by three armed men. In the spandrils are prophets and Patriarchs. Above them appear twelve male and female saints. The Annunciation in half figures crowns the whole.

No autograph work by either of the Lorenzetti is more dramatic, more poignant, or more ardent, and the execution is scarcely more slovenly than they can sink to. Yet I would not venture to ascribe it to the one or the other of these gifted brothers. The author seems to have been a closer follower of Pietro than of Ambrogio, and of Pietro in his earlier rather than later years. Lest somebody say that he was the painter I named Ugolino Lorenzetti, I add that I have considered this possibility and discarded it.

The other little polyptych²⁾ is nearer to Ambrogio than the last to Pietro. The principal subject here too is the Crucifixion and it is conceived in Ambrogio's broad and tragic spirit. In the strips to right and left are the Baptist, an elderly male saint with a shirt between his hands, and two female saints, Catherine probably and perhaps Helen. Below is a wonderful scene worthy of a great Sung painter. Out of the darkness and the night loom figures that spell out Our Lady and Joseph worshipping the Infant Jesus under a shed, while the shepherds are led to them by shining hosts of angels in the sky, and across a stream an angel swoops down with an olive branch toward two shepherds lying on a hillside.

Ambrogio never painted anything more ecstatic both in joy and grief, more impressive, more convincing. We are reminded of the mysterious Allegory in the Siena Academy (No. 92) where, too, looming out of the mist, we descry forms that with difficulty we can interpret as the Expulsion from Paradise, the Crucified Saviour and Christ Triumphant. I used to ascribe this great masterpiece of Christian art to Pietro. I would not do so now, and yet I am not satisfied that it is Ambrogio. Our little panel is in the same case. Not quite but very close to Ambrogio. The date can be fixed more certainly than the exact attribution. The Baptist is like the one above Ambrogio's *S. Procolo*³⁾ in the Bandini Gallery at Fiesole, and that seems to have been painted in 1332.

A younger contemporary of the Lorenzettis who did not escape their influence, although a loyal follower of Simone Martini, was Lippo Vanni. A little while ago he was a mere name. Thanks to the publication of a signed and dated triptych, showing him both as a painter and narrator, — I refer

¹⁾ Inv. No. 995. Central panel 99 by 25 cm. Side panels 96 by 24 cm each.

²⁾ Inv. No. 1005. H. 69 cm, W. 39 cm.

³⁾ Reproduced in De Nicola's *Soggiorno Fiorentino di Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, Fig. 2. See *Bolletino d'Arte*, Aug. 1922.



Abb. 5. School of Andrea Vanni, Triptych
Frankfurt, Städel-Museum

to the altar-piece now preserved, but very hard to get a sight of, in SS. Domenico and Sisto in Rome, — he has come to his own, and has been receiving the attention of most students of Sienese Art.

Less than a year ago I published a paper of some length about him, in which the interested reader will find references to previous writers as well as what I could myself add¹⁾. I take pleasure in adding still another panel to the number already known²⁾ although it can scarcely be said to increase our interest in this master, who, like all his townsmen excepting Duccio and Simone, is so disconcertingly uneven. In fact, this Städel Madonna, *Pl. VII b*, enthroned with Peter, Paul, two other saints and two angels is but a variant of a painting in Col. Friedsam's Collection in New York that I reproduced in the article just referred to (p. 283).

The only genius that Siena had after Duccio, Simone, and the Lorenzettis was Barna. He died young, probably before he had had time to express himself completely. We are not sure that the death of Raphael was a loss to art. It could be argued that an equally early cessation of activity on the part of Michelangelo would not have been mourned by the Muse of Painting, even if the sister Muses felt otherwise. But that Barna did not attain to the full flower of his years is to be placed, perhaps with the early death of Giorgione, among the disasters that have beset Humanism.

Nor did he, like Giorgione, leave a follower who in great measure could continue his work. Neither Bartolo di Fredi nor even Andrea Vanni were of a measure to succeed him. They merely exploited him, Bartolo, his narrative side alone, and Vanni his inspired sense of the spiritual, his prophetic zest, his ecstasy. Barna's panels are rare and still disputed³⁾. Frankfurt cannot boast of one, but has a specimen of Bartolo, and a fairly important triptych by Vanni.

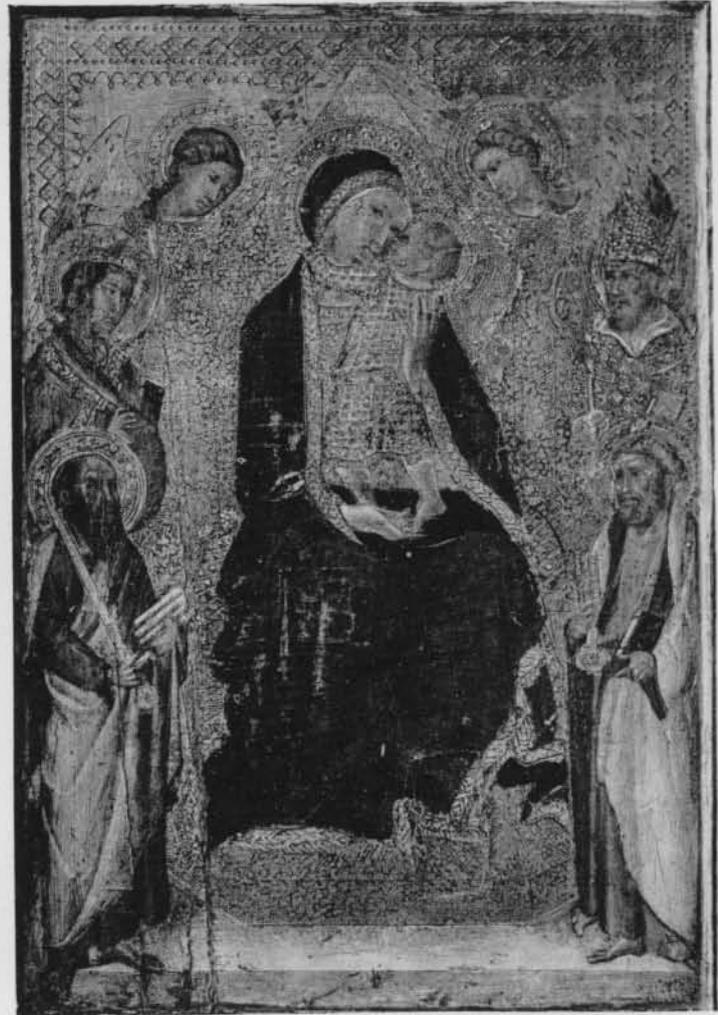
The Bartolo is a head of the Virgin, *Pl. VIII a*, a damaged but unrestored fragment dating from the best years of his career⁴⁾. It is slightly later but in other respects close to the early Madonna first published by Miss Vavasour-Elder in the *Rassegna d'Arte* for 1908 p. 161.

¹⁾ Un Antiphonaire avec Miniatures par Lippo Vanni, *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1924, pp. 257—285.

²⁾ Inv. No. 1470, H. 46,5 cm, W. 33,3 cm.

³⁾ No wonder, seeing the supremely finest of them has gone to America without having been seen by any student on this side of the Atlantic. It is known from quite inadequate reproductions. I refer to the triptych formerly in the collection of Count Carlo Zezza of Naples, and now in that of senator Clark, first published by Perkins and then by Van Marle.

⁴⁾ Inv. No. 1006. H. 37 cm, W. 27 cm.



a) Andrea Vanni: SS. Ursula, Anne and Agnes, b) Lippo Vanni: Madonna and Saints
Frankfurt a. Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut

Andrea Vanni¹⁾ is more completely represented. The three full length figures are of the size and kind to have adorned the pilasters of a polypych. They are very characteristic of the master even to the depth of the mouldings on the frames, and the pattern in relief on the spandrils. One represents St. Anne with the infant Mary in her arms, another St. Agnes, the third St. Ursula²⁾, *Pl. VII a*. Few female figures of the Gothic Era anywhere are more charming with more distinction. Vanni is here in his loveliest and softest mood.



Abb. 6. Martino di Bartolommeo, Deacon ordained by bishop
Frankfurt, Städel-Museum

Vanni had a considerable number of followers, and to distinguish between them is a fascinating absorbing and enviable task for which I feel every disposition. The lack of leisure alone compels me most reluctantly to leave it to others. I hope to set up a claim to the gratitude of these by calling their attention to a typical work of this group, one of average merit, a triptych representing the usual subjects, namely the Blessed Virgin with Saints in the centre panel, saints in each side panel, and in the gable, the Annunciation flanking the Crucifixion³⁾, *Fig. 5*. Who was the author? Certainly not Fei, nor Cola di Petrucciolo, nor anybody else known to me. Specialists must decide.

By Fei there is in the Städel Institut a half life size figure of St. Catherine⁴⁾, *Pl. VIII b*, which ranks with his best. This usually awkward, vulgar practitioner has, early in his career, moments of quaint daintiness, and later an occasional heartiness that is winning. It was his singular destiny to be the master of one of the most spiritually minded, and most delicate geniuses that even Siena ever had — I mean Sassetta⁵⁾ — as well as of the most whimsical and fascinatingly absurd, Giovanni di Paolo.

And yet Siena, at the turn of the century, had far more remarkable painters than Fei. It is doubtful whether even Florence was at that particular moment producing more stately work, inspired with a

¹⁾ Inv. Nos. 1467—69. Each 45 cm; by 12 cm.

²⁾ The labelling of these two saints by a slightly later hand as Anges and Orsina, leads me to ask whether the work of which these three bits formed a small part was not at home in Sardinia or possibly Corsica. It would be instructive and delightful to trace the rest. We still know Vanni in a ragged and tattered fashion, and such an increase of material would serve to complete the pattern.

³⁾ Inv. No. 996. H. 52 cm, W. 46 cm.

⁴⁾ Inv. No. 1002. H. 65 cm, W. 38 cm.

⁵⁾ By Sassetta himself there is nothing in the Städel Institut. Average specimens of his anonymous following are nos. 1003 and 1004, representing St. Ursula's reception in England, and her martyrdom.

nobler feeling for space, and a more convincing sense of form, than we find traces of in the fragments of frescoes of the sacristy chapel of the Siena Cathedral. They would seem to lead by a straight and broad road to the aspirations and ambitions of the Renaissance. It was not to be. They ended nowhere, and are so forgotten that even the encyclopædic and compendious Van Marle does not mention them.

Inferior to the painters of these frescoes, yet more masculine and in every way firmer and more convincing than any other of Vanni's immediate followers, was their contemporary Martino di Bartolommeo. When he returned from Pisa, where he left a number of paintings, he doubtless fell under their influence. But although it is hard to credit him with his highest achievements, when one knows how low he can sink — as indeed is the case with most of his townsmen excepting always Duccio and Simone — yet there can be no doubt that he painted the series of panels, *Pl. IX a, b, c, d; Pl. X a, b* and *Fig. 6*, in the Städelsches Institut illustrating, it would seem, the legend of St. Stephen¹).

We first see a woman lying in with the new-born babe lifted out of the cradle which the devil flies away with after replacing it with a demon in a child's shape, *Pl. X a*.

The babe left by the demon at the entrance to a palace is discovered by a bishop and his attendants as they come out of church, being suckled by a doe, *Pl. X b*.

At a sign made by a sainted deacon, to the amazement of the bystanders, the idols over the gates of a town break and fall, *Pl. IX d*.

¹) Inv. Nos. 988—994. Numbers 988 and 991 are 74 cm h., the others 69. All 59 cm W.

Van Marle is inclined to ascribe them to a North Italian who was acquainted with the art of Giovanni da Milano as well as of Altichiero (vol. IV, 259—263). This is mildly surprising on the part of the writer who has given the best account we now have of Martino di Bartolommeo (vol. III, 585—592), as is his failure to recognize that the radiant Annunciation in the Collegiate of Asciano is by him and not as I too thought in my "days of ignorance" by Taddeo di Bartolo. Other works which I would ascribe to Martino are: —

SIENA. Lunette over door in Via Bandini, a half destroyed and damaged but unrestored and monumental fresco representing the Madonna between Peter, Paul, the Baptist and a female saint.

FLORENCE. Bargello, Carrand Collection. No. 9. Madonna suckling the Child, two angels, Anthony, James, Catherine and another female saint, with the Ecce Homo above.

BAYONNE. Musée Bonnat. No. 4. Madonna with bust of Saviour above.

PARIS. Hotel Drouot. Febr. 4, 1924. No. 20, triptych (38 × 22 cm) ascribed to Taddeo di Bartolo. Madonna between Catherine, Lucy and two angels with Ecce Homo above. In the wings, the Annunciation, Stephen, the Baptist, Antony Abbot and a Saint with a staff.

BUDAPEST. 45. Triptych: Madonna with male and female Saint, and above the Saviour blessing. In wings, Annunciation, James and Antony Abbot.

CAMBRIDGE. Fitzwilliam Museum. No. 553. The Annunciation.

LONDON. Trade. Madonna enthroned with four donors at her feet.

My estimate of Martino is based upon these works besides those accepted by Van Marle. Still more necessary to the study of this painter is the Madonna of 1408 (78 × 59 cm) exhibited in Siena in 1904 (No. 7, Sala XXVII p. 305 of "Mostra dell' Antica Arte Sienese", Aprile-Agosto 1904. Siena, Lazzari), a beautiful presentation in the tradition of Simone, Barna, and Vanni. It then belonged to Signora Agata Bonichi of Asciano.

Let the keen and aspiring young American or German who composes a monograph on this painter, surely not less worthy than Jacopo del Casentino, Meo da Siena, Nonmissecca Fiesolano, Squaliduccio da Bettona, or what not, have these additions in mind. Let him further note that Van Marle does well to transfer various polyptychs in the Siena Gallery from Bartolommeo to Andrea di Bartolo, but that he ascribes to him a triptych there (no. 140) a Madonna between Andrew and Onophrio which is really by Gualtieri di Giovanni. The four Saints which went to America some thirty years ago, cleverly recognized by Van Marle (p. 388) in the poor photographs as Bartolommeo's, are in the Theodore Davis Legacy of the Metropolitan Museum New York.



a) Bartolo di Fredi: Head of Virgin, b) Paolo di Giovanni Fei: St. Catherine
Frankfurt a. Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut

Tafel VIII



A deacon enters a house and discovers the devil child in the cradle. At once he has him taken to the courtyard and burnt, *Pl. IX c.*

A deacon ordained by a bishop, *Fig. 6.*

A deacon disputing with twelve elders and bystanders, *Pl. IX b.*

The stoning of the deacon, *Pl. IX a.*

The last two scenes refer to Stephen as we know from any number of other pictures. The other five would seem to precede them and to form part of the same legend. Yet I have not succeeded in finding any reference to episodes corresponding with those in the published legends regarding the Protomartyr, although I have a haunting sense of having read something of the sort somewhere, in connection not with this saint but some other Stephen.

But this legend extended to Florence at least. In the frescoes at Prato, Fra Filippo depicts the rape of the infant Stephen by the devil and the bishop discovering the infant suckled by the doe. (Photo Alinari.)

Perhaps a legend of which the hero was a local saint of the same name has got mixed up, or rather telescoped with the real history of the Stephen of the Acts.

In the woodland church attached to the monastery of S. Lucchese, standing high over the road that from Poggibonsi leads to Staggia, there was uncovered two or three decades ago a fresco of about 1400 which illustrated the same story as in our panel. Unfortunately only three of the episodes are preserved enough for the far from exorbitant claims of iconography, two alone being photographed. Above is represented the Birth of the Saint. Below we see the devil babe cradled in the porch of a lordly dwelling while the infant Saint is being carried out to sea in a ship manned by demons¹). At the bottom a bishop stepping out of his cathedral discovers a doe suckling a child, *Pl. X c and d.*

There are tantalizingly illegible and interrupted inscriptions in these frescoes. Under the second I, who am not a bit of an epigraphist and as little of an hagiologist, seem to descry and interpret the following . . . chulla pichol . . . blino Stefano santo portato fusti in paese ne . . . In the lower episode the doe utters the words: *Hic es Stephanus filius Dei*, and under it I read: *trovato chebbe el vescovo ('t)roiano alla sua porta la cervia lactare Stephano santo die agovernare.*

It is annoying to be baffled for so little. If we could know the initial syllable of the name of the bishop, we might be able to identify the place to which to attach this curious story. One thing is certain: whoever this bishop was, it was not St. Peter. The Prince of the Apostles, when not bareheaded, never wears an episcopal mitre but a papal tiara.

As works of art, these seven Frankfurt panels rank with the best painting produced in Italy in that rather fallow moment, the first decade of the Fifteenth century. I should be at a loss to name anything more dramatic as narrative, clearer and more rhythmic in grouping, more realized in space, better constructed, and of pleasanter colour in Italian painting just before the maturity of Lorenzo Monaco and the first revelations of Fra Angelico and Masolino. They remind us of Mariotto di Nardo's best, but how much better than that best²)!

¹) In the St. Bartholomew painted in 1401 by Lorenzo di Niccolo for the neighbouring S. Gimignano (photo. Brogi 15287), in the birth scene, a black devil snatches the infant saint from the cradle.

²) It is interesting to note that we find here one of the first instances in Italian Art where the idols destroyed are not mediæval fancies but Greco-Roman statues seen in a surprisingly Renaissance way. In fact, it might be possible for an archæologist to reconstruct them.



Abb. 7. Lorenzo Monaco, The Saviour enthroned
Frankfurt, Städel-Museum

A better known artist, and deservedly better known, Lorenzo Monaco, must have been in close touch with the group that painted the frescoes in the Chapel of the Virgin in the sacristy of the Siena cathedral. His types, his action, and his carefully folded draperies show marked affinities with theirs. It is a pity that calligraphy twirled away with him, reducing him, as it did so many of the best artists in France, Spain and Germany at the same time, to little better than dancing dervishes in paint. Curious that he should have been so utterly carried away by the last flurry of Gothic sweeping down from the Franco-Flemish workshops over the Cottian Alps. Florence did not quite recover from the consequences before the end of the Quattrocento.

Here at Frankfurt we see Lorenzo in his most heroic but not most agreeable mood¹⁾, *Fig. 7*. The painting representing the Saviour seated in the heavens blessing with one hand and holding the terrestrial globe surmounted by a cross in the other, was probably intended to crown one of those extensive polyptychs reminding us of Gothic façades, that were common in Florence particularly in the pre-Renaissance years of the Quattrocento. It is therefore painted broadly,

almost crudely, and lacks the daintiness to which his more minute work has accustomed us.

Finally we have a Madonna enthroned with two kneeling angels²⁾, *Fig. 8*. It shows in the Madonna — her hand particularly — the influence of Rossello di Jacopo Franco, and in the angels that of Giovanni del Ponte, two belated but attractive Trecentists who “kept smiling” to the end. No wonder, for the Renaissance did not come like an Assyrian conqueror. On the contrary, even in Florence most people were cheerfully unaware of it till well on to the middle of the 15th century, and ordered more and more elaborately gorgeous, refulgent, twirling, blinking creations of the sunset of Gothic design. But for the accident of death, it would have been Bicci di Lorenzo, and not Piero della Francesca who painted the story of the True Cross at Arezzo.

This article had gone to the press when I received from Mr. A. Hyatt Mayor, of Christ Church, Oxford, a copy of a text extracted from an 11th Century Codex at Montecassino, printed on p. 37, Vol. III of *Bibliotheca Casinensis*, Monte Cassino, 1877. This text, entitled “*Fabulosa Vita di Stephani Protomartyris*” is unfortunately no better, as a text, than an illustration to it, done by the worst of contemporary painters of “Exultets”, would have been. It is so confused that we learn nothing from it except that the name of the Bishop was Julianus, and that the legend was already current in the

¹⁾ Inv. No. 1177. H. 87 cm, W. 34 cm with frame.

²⁾ Inv. No. 1167. H. 1,22 cm, W. 55 cm.



a



c



b



d

Martino di Bartolommeo

a) Stoning of St. Stephen, b) Disputation of St. Stephen with Jews,
 c) Deacon discovers Demon and has him burned, d) St. Stephen destroys idols over town gate

Frankfurt a. Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut

Tafel IX

11th Century. It is curious, by the way, that it should have been illustrated in the heart of Tuscany alone. As Heinrich Weizsäcker points out in his Catalogue of the Städel Institute (to which unfortunately I had no access previously, but which also mentions the Monte Cassino text) there is a trace of this Legend in the Predella to Andrea Vanni's Polyptych at S. Stefano in Siena. The painter, Giovanni di Paolo, retains of this story only the episode of the doe suckling the infant, but this suffices to prove that the story remained current in Siena on into the 15th Century, full two generations after the Fresco at S. Lucchese. Two days ago Number I—II of the *Rassegna d'Arte Senese* for 1924 brought me an article by F. Mason Perkins on Martino di Bartolommeo. It attributes to this artist painter several of the pictures I have here ascribed to him — a happy instance of students working separately and reaching the same result. The article reproduces the Annunciation at Asciano, as well as the Madonna of 1408, formerly in the Bonichi Collection of that town.

February 4th, 1924.

Kurze deutsche Inhaltsangabe des
Aufsatzes von B. Berenson

Der Inhalt des Berensonschen Aufsatzes, der die toskanischen Trecentobilder im Städel'schen Kunstinstitut behandelt, ist kurz folgender:

Die beiden Tafeln mit der Darstellung des von Aposteln umgebenen thronenden Christus und der von Heiligen umgebenen thronenden Madonna, *Abb. 3, 4*, schreibt Berenson nach dem Vorgang von Curt Weigelt (*Rassegna d'Arte Senese* V, 101—105) dem Meo da Siena zu. Vom gleichen Meister sind, wie Weigelt schon festgestellt hat, ein Triptychon im Dom von Perugia und ein signierter Altar in der Galerie von Perugia. Meo scheint von etwa 1319 bis zu seinem Tode zwischen 1333 und 34 in Perugia und Umgebung gearbeitet zu haben. Er muß unter Duccio oder einem seiner Nachfolger gelernt haben. Der signierte Altar in der Galerie in Perugia ist sehr provinzieller Art, verrät aber zugleich Bologneser Einflüsse, während dem Domtriptychon offenbar Anregungen aus dem Kunstzentrum Siena zugute gekommen sind. Das Frankfurter Spätwerk zeigt das Zurücksinken in eine seltsam bäurische Manier, die auf die



Abb. 8. Florentine about 1430, Madonna and two Angels
Frankfurt, Städel-Museum

provinzielle Abgeschlossenheit des Malers, auf sein Fernsein vom anregenden Kunstzentrum zurückzuführen ist.

Die kleine Tafel mit der Madonna, mit Petrus, Paulus, dem Täufer und drei anderen Heiligen, *Tafel Va*, hält Berenson für eine eigenhändige Arbeit des Jacopo del Casentino, in Übereinstimmung mit Richard Offner (cf. Bolletino d'Arte del Ministero della Publica Istruzione, Dez. 1923), im Gegensatz zu van Marle, der sie für das Werk eines Malers hält, der wohl in naher Beziehung zu Jacopo steht, „aber nicht er selbst ist“ (cf. van Marle, *The Italian Schools of Painting*, Bd. III, S. 654). Berenson sieht auch bei Jacopo del Casentino Bologneser Beziehungen, die durch Meo vermittelt sein könnten, vor allem aber betont er den Einfluß des bedeutendsten Giottoschülers, des Bernardo Daddi.

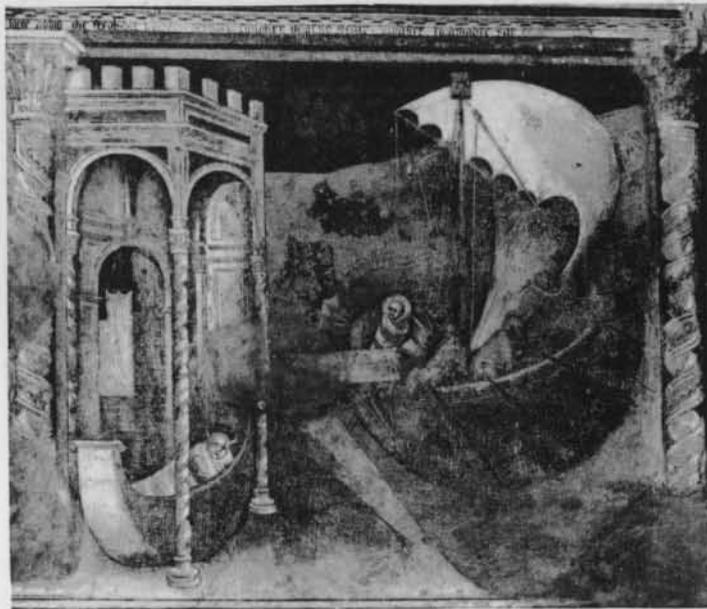
Charakteristisch für Barnaba da Modena, von dem das Städelsche Institut eine Madonna besitzt, *Tafel Vb*, ist sein unentwegtes Festhalten am byzantinischen Stil. Mit Siena hat er wie die meisten italienischen Maler außerhalb Toscanas nichts zu tun. — Zwei kleine Altäre, die Zusammenhang mit den Lorenzettis zeigen, sind schwer näher zu bestimmen. Der eine mit der Kreuzigung, der Maria im hortus conclusus und einer Reihe anderer Szenen zeigt, *Tafel VIa*, stammt wohl von einem Schüler des Pietro Lorenzetti aus dessen Frühzeit. Die Möglichkeit, das Bild dem Ugolino Lorenzetti zuzuschreiben, wird abgelehnt. — Der andere kleine Altar, *Tafel VIb*, steht dem Ambrogio Lorenzetti sehr nahe, der nie etwas gemalt hat, „das ekstatischer in Freude oder Schmerz, eindrucksvoller oder überzeugender wäre“. Er muß um 1332 entstanden sein.

Die thronende Madonna zwischen Petrus, Paulus, zwei anderen Heiligen und zwei Engeln, *Tafel VIIb*, schreibt Berenson dem Lippo Vanni zu. Sie ist eine Variante des Bildes in der Sammlung Friedsam in New York (cf. Berenson, *Un Antiphonaire avec Miniatures par Lippo Vanni*, *Gazette Des Beaux Arts* 1924, S. 257/58). — In dem beschädigten, „aber nicht verrestaurierten“ Madonnenkopf, *Tafel VIIa*, erkennt Berenson ein Werk des Bartolo di Fredi. — Die drei schmalen Täfelchen mit den anmutigen Darstellungen der Maria, Agnes und Ursula, *Tafel VIIa*, schreibt er dem Andrea Vanni zu. — Von einem vorläufig nicht näher zu bestimmenden Schüler Vannis ist das Triptychon mit der Jungfrau und Heiligen auf Mittel- und Seitentafeln, der Verkündigung zu beiden Seiten der Kreuzigung im Giebel, *Abb. 5*. Dem Paolo di Giovanni Fei wird die lebensgroße heilige Katharina zugeschrieben, *Tafel VIIIb*. Sie gehört zu den besten Bildern des Meisters. —

In den sieben Tafeln mit den ungewöhnlichen Darstellungen aus der Stefanuslegende, *Tafel IXa, b, c, d*; *Tafel Xa, b* und *Abb. 6*, erkennt Berenson Arbeiten des Martino di Bartolommeo; im Gegensatz zu van Marle, der sie einem Oberitaliener zuschreibt, der der Kunst des Giovanni da Milano und des Altichiero nahestehe. — Drei Szenen des gleichen eigenartigen Legendenstoffs sind dargestellt auf einem Fresko in der Waldkirche beim Kloster S. Lucchese bei Poggibonsi. (Zwei davon auf *Tafel Xc* und *d*.) Nahezu vollständig findet sich der Legendenstoff in einem Manuskript des 11. Jahrhunderts in der Bibliothek von Monte Cassino. — Die Frankfurter Tafeln gehören zu dem Besten, was im ersten Jahrzehnt des 15. Jahrhunderts in Italien geschaffen wurde. — Die Tafel mit dem thronenden Christus, *Abb. 7*, ist ein typisches Werk des Lorenzo Monaco. Wahrscheinlich bildete sie die Bekrönung eines vierteiligen Altars. — Die thronende Madonna, *Abb. 8*, zeigt die Beeinflussung durch Rossello di Jacopo Franco und durch Giovanni del Ponte.



a



c



b



d

Martino di Bartolommeo
a) Substitution of Demon for Infant, b) Infant suckled by a Doe
Frankfurt a. Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut

Tuscan toward 1400
c und d) Scenes as in fig. a and b
S. Lucchese, Poggibonsi