

*Mimesis as Pictoriality of Semblance. On the Fictiveness of Religious Imagery in the Trecento**

KLAUS KRÜGER

An emerging new sense of reality, one based on the empirical imitation of nature, has typically been considered a particular hallmark of the age of Giotto. The contemporary world reveals a new significance and authority of meaning, after it had long been sidelined by the prevailing belief in a transcendental truth. In the period, this finds its expression in the main goals of painting: fresh proximity to nature, and object-oriented display. Now the contemporary world itself, which can be experienced through the senses, claims to embody the 'truth' of being, the 'actual real', and it has been liberated from the role of merely indicating and symbolising a timeless, pre-existing, and universal transcendence.¹

Yet, along with this new validity of reality, arises also the possibility of experiencing fiction, the non-real, which always refers to the inherent value of the real by antithesis, as its semblance (*Schein*), as its deceiving simulation or its freely invented imitation, *forma ficta*. Reality and fiction form a system that manifests itself as difference and variance played out on a number of levels.²

In the imagery (*Bildkunst*) of the period, this interplay finds its expression in a broad and complex variety of representational forms and functions. The numerous examples of large-scale fictive architectural systems are relatively 'straightforward' in their representational aims. These can be found in many shapes, from interior designs like the Upper Church in Assisi to decorative arrangements like the recently restored chapel by Taddeo Gaddi (c. 1330)

* First publication: Klaus Krüger, 'Mimesis als Bildlichkeit des Scheins – Zur Fiktionalität religiöser Bildkunst im Trecento', in *Künstlerischer Austausch – Artistic Exchange*, ed. by Thomas W. Gaehtgens (Berlin: Akademie, 1993), pp. 423–37. Translated by Julia Bokody and Péter Bokody.

1 For the discussion of the problem: Julia Kristeva, 'From Symbol to Sign', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (New York: Columbia, 1986), pp. 62–73.

2 On this problem see: Hans Robert Jauss, 'Zur historischen Genese der Scheidung von Fiktion und Realität', in *Funktionen des Fiktiven*, ed. by Dieter Henrich and Wolfgang Iser (Munich: Fink, 1983), pp. 423–31.



Fig. 1. Pietro Lorenzetti, *Fictive Bench*, Saint John the Evangelist Altar, before 1319, fresco (Lower Church, San Francesco, Assisi).

in the castle of the Guidi counts in Poppi.³ To the same category belong the numerous cases of optical illusions created with virtuosity. Impressive examples include Giotto's famous fictive niches in the Arena chapel or Pietro Lorenzetti's wall-painting of a fictive three-dimensional wooden bench with carpet upholstery in the left arm of the transept in the Lower Church at Assisi (c. 1315–20) (fig. 1).⁴ The image-type of fictive polyptychs, which appears from the early Trecento onwards, is comparable in terms of its illusionistic capacity. Here the carved framework of the composite altarpiece-structure is simulated in painted form.⁵ In the fresco decora-

3 Sven Sandström, *Levels of Unreality. Studies in structure and construction in Italian mural painting during the Renaissance* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1963); Karl Stamm, 'Probleme des Bildes und der Dekoration in mittelitalienischen Freskenzyklen der Zeit um 1300 bis in die Mitte des Quattrocento' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bonn, 1974). For Assisi: Hans Belting, *Die Oberkirche von San Francesco in Assisi: ihre Dekoration als Aufgabe und die Genese einer neuen Wandmalerei* (Berlin: Mann, 1977). For Poppi: *Gli affreschi di Taddeo Gaddi nel Castello dei Conti Guidi di Poppi*, ed. by Alessandro Brezzi (Poppi: Biblioteca Comunale Rilliana, 1991).

4 *La nature morte de l'antiquité à nos jours*, ed. by Charles Sterling (Paris: Tisné, 1952), p. 16; Charles de Tolnay, 'Le origines de la nature morte moderne', *La Revue des Arts*, 2 (1952), 151–52; Charles de Tolnay, 'Postilla sulle origini della natura morta moderna', *Rivista d'Arte*, 36 (1962), 3–10; and as well Barbara John, *Stilleben in Italien: die Anfänge der Bildgattung im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1991).

5 A systematic analysis of this widespread form of representation is still missing. Pier Paolo Donati, 'Un finto politico ad affresco a Montepulciano', *Paragone*, 30, no. 349–51 (1979), 25–29; Eve Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p. 46; *Die Kirchen von Siena*, ed. by Peter Anselm Riedl and



Fig. 2. *Fictive Polyptych*, Sacred Heart Altar, c. 1370, fresco (Sant' Andrea, Siena).

tion of a niche at the Sacred Heart altar in S. Andrea (Siena, 1370s), the architectural and decorative richness of the two-storey polyptych keeps pace with the highly sophisticated standards of contemporary altarpieces: the twisted columns and ornamented gables with crockets, as well as the corbels represented in foreshortening between the two levels which give the illusion of an altar-frame actually extending into space (fig. 2).⁶ The phenomenon of the fictive polyptych is a demonstrative manifestation of a pictorial process that fulfils representative demands by aiming at an equivalence with physical appearance (*Erscheinung*).

A similar connection between fictive image- and object-types can be detected in other genres or areas, such as panel painting or sculpture. Cases include a monumental fresco representation of a fictive *croce dipinta* from c. 1320–30 in the right arm of the transept in S. Francesco, Pistoia (only the underdrawing survives),⁷ or the examples of fictive altar-shrines for saints like the retable of Saint Quiteria (c. 1330) and Saint Eulalia (c. 1375) in Palma de Mallorca (fig. 3).⁸ Both

Max Seidel (Munich: Bruckmann, 1985), I/1, p. 286 (Enrica Neri Lusanna).

6 See Enrica Neri Lusanna's description (as in note 5).

7 Andrea Bacchi, 'Pittura del Duecento e del Trecento nel Pistoiese', in *La pittura in Italia. Il Duecento e il Trecento*, ed. by Enrico Castelnuovo (Milan: Electa, 1986), pp. 315–24, esp. p. 319.

8 Compare: Klaus Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien. Gestalt- und Funktionswandel des Tafelbildes im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Mann, 1992), p. 31 and p. 34 (with illustrations).



Fig. 3. *Fictive Painted Cross*, c. 1320–30, fresco (San Francesco, Pistoia).

were created under the direct influence of Italian Trecento painting, and they simulate the impression of real sculpture in the medium of panel painting. Or, finally, there is the late-Trecento fresco in the Church of the Annunciation, in S. Agata dei Goti (Campania). Here, the fresco is placed directly above the main altar on the eastern wall of the choir chapel, and imitates in the medium of mural painting the liturgical instrument of a bronze cross with trefoil arms and spike, which is presented by angels.⁹

These examples are more than mere by-products of the pleasure found in experimenting with perspective or performing tricks with optical illusion. They already imply the complexity which reveals itself in mimetic representation and display.

Let us have a look at a telling case. A panel painting by Bernardo Daddi (c. 1335, Florence) constructs an internal pictorial relation between Christ the Redeemer in the gable, the framing figures of saints, and the half-figure of the Virgin Mary as an image-within-image (fig. 4).¹⁰

⁹ Compare: Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus*, p. 93, no. 134.

¹⁰ *Pittura italiana del Duecento e Trecento*, Catalogo della mostra giottesca di Firenze del 1937, ed. by Giulia Brunetti and Giulia Sinibaldi (Florence: Sansoni, 1943), p. 529; *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo a Firenze*, ed. by Luisa



Fig. 4. Bernardo Daddi, *Virgin of Bagnolo with Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Zenobius*, c. 1335, tempera on panel (Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence).

While the framing program resonates with the composite structure of large-scale triptychs and polyptychs, especially in the generic arrangement of the gable with the half-figure of the Saviour, the central part simulates the objecthood of a close-up Marian panel with detailed imitation of woodgrain on its framework. The typical composite altarpiece is representative also in terms of its content, and it is merged with the close-up, self-identical Marian icon in such way that it thematises on various levels the difference between their notions of the image as such.

The representation aims to convey a coherent logic of space and action with its perspectival composition and situational context which brings together the depicted figures. At the same time, it attains an intentionally designed discontinuity in its levels of reality, and not only with regard to the scale of the figures. Its true relevance crystallises around the ambivalence of Mary's ontological status. She appears in the form and status of a panel painting, and as such she is set apart from all the other depicted figures in terms of her ontological status. At the same time, she appears active like them, filled with a vivid presence communicating out of her image. She is an image, and yet in this she is of personal presence. The panel painting is thematised here as medium in its true sense, through which the heavenly figure, by virtue of her fictiveness, encounters the earthly one. The personal reality of Mary is captured in the pictorial form.¹¹

Without following here closely the development that leads to this image-type, one can say that its origins can be traced back to the late Duecento. These panel paintings depict the Mother of God behind a fictive parapet held by consoles and similarly keep her in an ambiguity between reality and image. Especially the panel from Venice (c. 1280), the earliest example of this type known to me, is evidently close to the Florentine image in its composite structure and its frame consisting of saints and Christ the Redeemer with angels in the mutilated upper part.¹² That someone through the parapet designed for an object such an explicitly intentional impression of its real presence indicates that one understood the reality of Mary *per se* as pictorial.¹³ The image is 1.70 meters high, exceptional for a half-length figure, and at the same time the extraordinary gigantic appearance of Mary is in immediate contrast to the small-scale display of the saints.

The case is similar in Duccio's Madonna panel, where the bordering ornamental frame of punch marks overshadows the impression of an illusionistic space behind the parapet, and thus reveals Mary's reality as pictorial (fig. 5).¹⁴ Through these techniques, the representation

Becherucci and Giulia Brunetti (Milan: Electa, 1970), II, p. 281.

- 11 Compare the analysis of this image to: Klaus Krüger, 'Bildandacht und Bergeinsamkeit: der Eremit als Rollenspiel in der städtischen Gesellschaft', in *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*, ed. by Hans Belting and Dieter Blume (Munich: Hirmer, 1989), pp. 187–200, esp. p. 193.
- 12 171 × 27 cm, Museo Marciano, Venice. Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque panel painting. An Illustrated Index* (Florence: Olschki, 1949), no. 131; *Venezia e bisanzio*, ed. by Italo Furlan (Venice: Alfieri, 1974), no. 66 (with literature).
- 13 For further aspects of this image-type in the context of Marian theology and exegesis (*Maria dicitur fenestra coeli*) see: Hana Hlaváčková and Hana Seifertová, 'Mostecká Madona – imitatio a symbol', *Umení*, 33 (1985), 44–57 (with English abstract).
- 14 27 × 41 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. James H. Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and His School* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979), I, p. 27; John White, *Duccio. Tuscan Art and the Medieval Workshop* (London:



Fig. 5. Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Virgin and Child*, c. 1295–1305, tempera and gold on panel (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



Fig. 6. Niccolò di Tommaso, *Christ on the Cross*, after 1350, tempera on panel (Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples).

acquires its true relevance: the significance of image as image. The representation offers itself to the beholder as sensual object of her or his devotion, and yet by its pictorial structure deprives her or him from the immersive experience of unmediated perception. The unique potential of the fictive structure emerges when the beholder is involved in, and yet separated from, the representation. The epiphany of the heavenly figures does not take place in the sensual representation but in the subjectivity of the beholders themselves.

The abovementioned Marian panels are not the only examples in this context. A painted cross in San Francesco in Brescia from c. 1350 depicts the crucified with extreme accuracy: the iron nails pierce into the flesh of the hands and feet, the limbs are strained by the body's weight, the twisting of the knees is overstretched, the ribs and the chest are deformed.¹⁵ Also, the wooden cross appears as a tangible presence with its naturalistic woodgrain, and the chosen perspective is from below and from the side. Yet, it intentionally differs from the cross-shape of the panel itself, and is therefore clearly defined in its fictive and inner-image nature. The actual experience of the representation reveals itself only through the experience of the represented figure as an image.

Direct counterparts to this are the crucifixes designed with figure-shape panels, which appear in great number from the early Trecento and have their heyday – tellingly – around 1400, during the International Style (fig. 6).¹⁶ Since its outline is exactly identical with the represented figure, this crucifix belongs to an image-type which negates the cross-shape panel itself as the bearer of the image (by rejecting the established object-shape of the *croce dipinta*). It feigns, therefore, a guise comparable to sculpture in the sense of being truly identical with the representation. At the same time, this effect is overwritten in the very illusionism of painting, and so the distinctive character of the representation as an image becomes the defining experience. The representation simulates a sensual-tactile presence – and yet this happens only in the imagination.

The increasingly widespread combinations of a sculpted cross and a flat painted Crucifixion scene (including the auxiliary figures) show awareness of form and medium from the late Trecento onwards, and they aim – albeit with different means – at a similarly complex perception. In these cases, the cross is integrated into the painted scene in terms of its spatial and narrative logic, and at the same time it appears detached from it because of its reality as an object. It mutually underscores the different reality-status of their respective appearances as painted and sculpted works. The example from Volterra emphasizes the distinct character of

Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 62.

15 *Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia. XI: Brescia*, ed. by Antonio Morassi (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1939), p. 261; *Pitture in Brescia dal Duecento all'Ottocento*, ex. cat. (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1946), p. 17, no. 3; *La pittura in Italia. Il Duecento e il Trecento*, ed. by Enrico Castelnuovo (Milan: Electa, 1986), p. 75 and p. 79 (C. Piovano).

16 For a preliminary survey of these works see: Margit Lisner, *Holzkrucifixe in Florenz und in der Toskana von der Zeit um 1300 bis zum frühen Cinquecento* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1970), p. 11; Friedrich Kobler and Karl-August Wirth, 'Figurentafel', *RDK*, 8 (1985), 950–1012, esp. p. 959. For a case study see: Maria Laura Cristiani Testi, 'Circostanze avignonesi. Il crocifisso double-face del cardinale Godin a Tolosa', *Critica d'arte*, 55 (1990), 42–61. For the general history and illusionistic role of this image-type see: Jacques Wilhelm, 'Silhouettes and Trompe-l'oeil cut-outs', *The Art Quarterly*, 16 (1953), 294–304; Célestine Dars, *Images of Deception: The Art of Trompe-l'oeil* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979); Ulrich Sahn, 'Augen-täuschende Belebung', *Daidalos*, 8 (1983), 48–53.

the cross (today lost) by prominently placing it on twisted column, almost like an idol.¹⁷ The Crucifixion panel by Neri di Bicci in Toulouse adopts a mode of presentation which is directly related to these works (fig. 7). It stems from the second half of the Quattrocento, and a figure-shape panel of the crucified Christ by Lorenzo Monaco is inserted onto it – a direct analogue to the sculpted crosses.¹⁸ This example strikingly illustrates with its plasticity-effect the above-mentioned impression of simulated sculpture that characterizes the figure-shape panels. Yet, the interpretation can be further nuanced here. The Quattrocento panel from c. 1460 was made solely to hold the cross from c. 1400, and it is presented as a relic-like precious item in the centre of the image. The panel relates to the cross in its spatial and narrative logic, as well in its emotional context of silent compassion, and yet preserves intentionally the stylistic difference in the halos, the hairstyle, etc. The higher thematic claim of Christ's person is revealed in its extraordinary quality as image-object – its older age generates a stronger aura. The eschatological-transhistorical meaning is evoked through the experience of an enacted past, which is at the same time measureable on a worldly scale.

It emerges here that the experience of transcendence, which happens by perceiving the variance of different time-segments in the image, also finds parallels in the contemporary and widespread theoretical notions about images. Namely, there might be more of the divine (*plus numinis*) in older images than in new ones. It is echoed, therefore, in the notion that the eternal divine (*numen*) can be captured in the worldly category of measureable time.¹⁹ In the early fifteenth century this is illustrated by the recommendation of the Dominican monk, Giovanni Dominici, when he suggests that instead of splendid and shiny golden images children should be exposed to old, smoke-blackened ones to enhance their devotion.²⁰

In the preference for old images over the new ones there manifests a way of thinking that no longer considers 'the present and the past enclosed within a common historical horizon' but which, under the influence of a new sense of reality, situates instead history in time.²¹ This ability to differentiate between old and new time attests the burgeoning awareness for the unique character of the past.

This thinking is mirrored in the views about images and visualization, and not just since the

17 Franco Lessi, *La Pinacoteca e il Museo Civico di Palazzo Minucci Solaini, Volterra* (Milan: Garolla, 1986), p. 20. The rich corresponding material has not been examined so far.

18 111 × 73 cm, no. 401, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse. Marvin Eisenberg, *Lorenzo Monaco* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989), p. 170 (with further literature).

19 Christine Göttler, 'Die Disziplinierung des Heiligenbildes durch altgläubige Theologen nach der Reformation. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des Sakralbildes im Übergang von Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit', in *Bilder und Bildersturm im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Bob Scribner and Martin Warnke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990), pp. 263–97, esp. pp. 266, 268, 275, 286.

20 Giovanni Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, ed. by Donato Salvi (Florence, 1860), pp. 132–33.

21 Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004), p. 10. Regarding the genesis of a new understanding for the specific character of historical time periods, which Koselleck dates too late, and for the shift from event history to the rationally measurable and regulated time in the fourteenth century see: Jacques Le Goff, 'Die Arbeitszeit in der Krise des 14. Jahrhunderts: von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Zeit', in Jacques Le Goff, *Für ein anderes Mittelalter. Zeit, Arbeit und Kultur im Europa des 5.–15. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1984), pp. 29–42; and Jacques Le Goff, 'Zeit der Kirche und Zeit des Händlers im Mittelalter', in *Schrift und Materie der Geschichte. Vorschläge zur systematischen Aneignung historischer Prozesse*, ed. by Claudia Honegger (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 393–414.

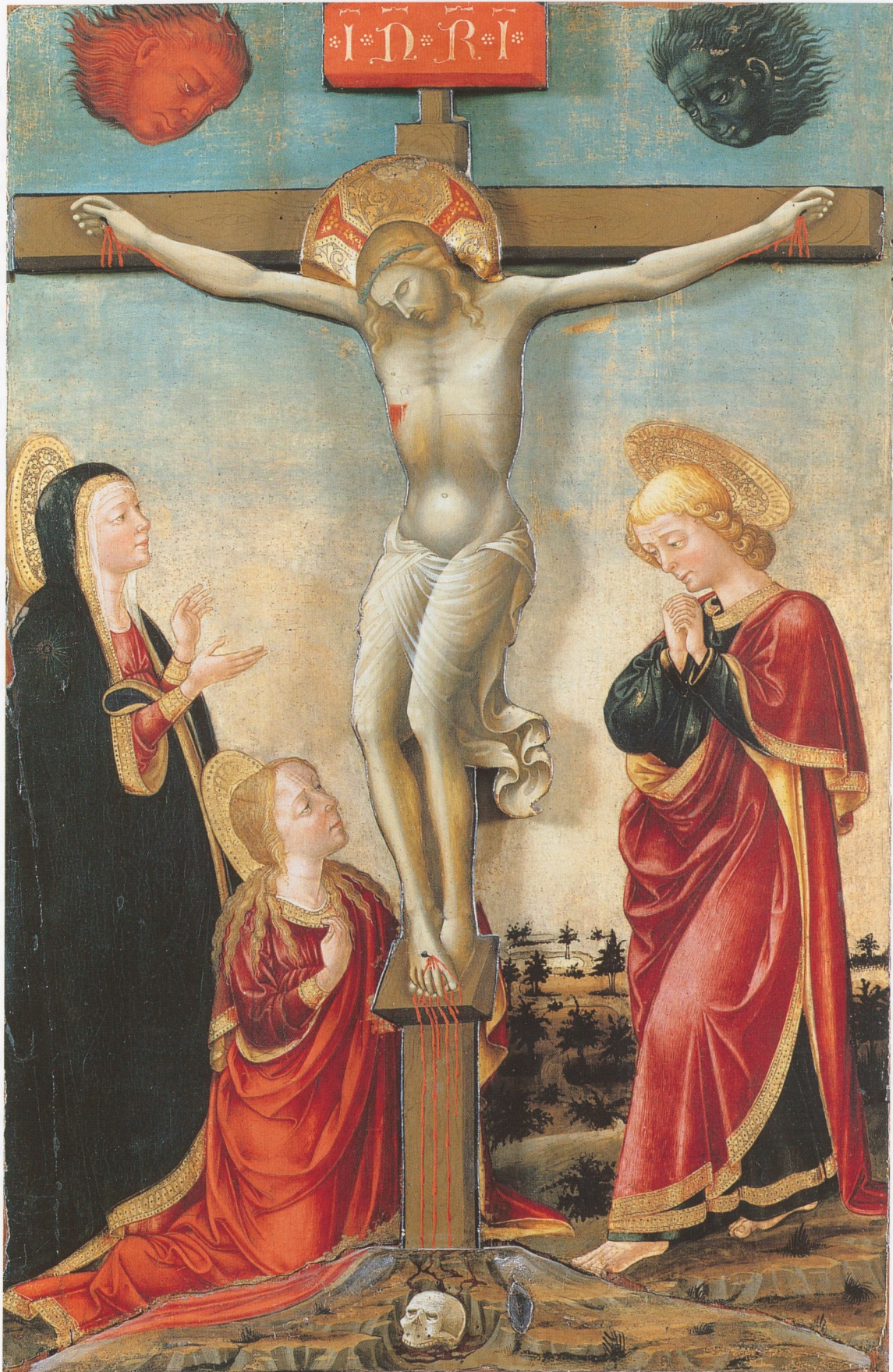


Fig. 7. Neri di Bicci and Lorenzo Monaco, *Crucifixion*, tempera on panel, c. 1400 and 1460, (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse).

Quattrocento. Ambrogio Lorenzetti reduces the perspectival composition of space and figures suggestively to a strict symmetrical, planimetric and hierarchical pictorial arrangement in his Madonna panel from Vico l'Abate (1319) (fig. 8). This is achieved through the frontality of the composition, the strict frontal gaze of the Mother of God, the symmetrical and central place of her head with the halo, the elaborate planimetric pattern of the throne, and the exact correspondence between the shape of the throne and the frame. Ambrogio Lorenzetti achieves here a systematic reduction, an *Aufhebung* of the aesthetic difference between the subject of the image and the shape of the panel as an object. The image as a consequence can evidently be connected to the shape of Madonna panels with incised and solid haloes from the mid-Duecento, which was (and recognized) long outdated at the time, such as the Madonna from Greve in Chianti from the 1250s. All this reveals a *par excellence* pictorial strategy to a large extent based on the awareness of style, which therefore opens up a retrospective, in fact historicising tendency, a new approach towards the unique character of the works from the past as representational possibility.²²

One can note a number of similar pictorial procedures, where the reflection on time is translated into an image. Widely disseminated examples were images of the Madonna with chrysography (garment treated with gold lines) from the mid-fourteenth century. Chrysography was known from Byzantium and it was particularly common in the second half of the Duecento during the reception of Byzantine visual culture. Later, in the Italian Trecento applying chrysography meant, therefore, to take up again a representational language which by then had already become an anachronism. An image of the Madonna from c. 1330–40 in Washington shows the figures before an illusionistic textile background held tight by angels, and depicts the faces, bodies, and proportions in a stylistically consistent and up-to-date representational language (fig. 9).²³ Ultimately, even chrysography is not presented here as an abstract-schematic system, but it is realised in an up-to-date and naturalistic treatment of the garment. This indicates that the representation was not intended to be the copy of an authentic original, the visual repetition of a specific prototype considered 'true', but rather that one regarded the reality of Mary *a priori* as pictorial, and therefore the retrospective similarity itself remained fictive. On Lorenzetti's Madonna from Vico l'Abate, the representation of the Child Christ can be interpreted similarly: within the symmetrical-planimetric and archaically strict layout of the image unfolds a vivid and realistic appearance which is captured in entirely contemporary stylistic forms and fills the space (fig. 8). In relation to these works, one could examine the reverse phenomenon of overpainting: the later additions and modernizing alterations. Significantly, one encounters this technique more and more frequently after 1300. The Madonna in the Sienese Palazzo Pubblico from c. 1270 is a famous example with the face fully renovated in the early Trecento.²⁴ Here, the credibility of the representation as an authentic repetition of

22 Bruce Cole, 'Old in New in the early Trecento', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 17 (1973), 229–48, esp. 234. For the Madonna from Greve (today in the Uffizi, Florence) see: *Capolavori e restauri*, ed. by Anna Forlani Tempesti (Florence: Cantini, 1986), p. 419.

23 *Catalogue of the Italian paintings*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, ed. by Fern Rusk Shapley (Washington: Editors Office, 1979), I, p. 316, no. 711.

24 James Stubblebine, *Guido da Siena* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964), p. 30; White, *Duccio*, p. 25; Henk van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces 1215–1460. Form, Content, Function* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1984), I, p. 26. On this se



Fig. 9. Giovanni Baronzio, *Virgin and Child*, c. 1335, tempera on panel (National Gallery of Art, Washington).

Mary is not guaranteed by the age or quality of the panel, nor by the 'essence' of the prototype which would be woven into a fixed configuration of facial features. On the contrary, it is guaranteed by the persuasive power of a modernized impression. This possibility is based primarily on the fictive structure of the representation.

If we take a comprehensive look on the examples discussed so far, the complexity within the system of pictorial mimesis and display emerges clearly. This complexity suggests that one should be cautious not to approach the novel proximity to nature and graphic objectivity in terms of a new 'legibility' of the represented and an unmediated, pre-reflective intelligibility for the new illiterate lay audience, as it is usually done.²⁵ Instead, from this opposite interpretive perspective, the aesthetics of the fictive – so to speak – becomes apparent. Here, the status of the image is rethought in new terms and with new aspirations, and it is recognized in its creative and fictive role as a medium that produces objects and brings reality forth, as opposed to merely designating some eternal truth.

Yet, this inherent relativization and mediated nature of truth in pictorial representation also indicate a particular awareness of the fact that the crafted and fictive form of truth loses its binding authority, and it can turn into deceitful illusion and misleading semblance.

The theme of discrepancy between being and appearance, deeds and words, intent and conduct, up to the 'disintegration of subjectivity', varies and repeats itself in an elaborate metaphor on deception. It was widely discussed already in sermons, poems and didactic literature in the thirteenth century: who does not have virtues bears the outer countenance of a human, but carries only the heart of an animal, his tongue bears honey, his inner will is filled with pus; if the false praises, he will appear like the illusion of a puppet, etc.²⁶ These metaphors were shaped by the corresponding tropes in the Bible such as the deceitful idols, hypocritical speech, the figure of the false Apostle, and ultimately the oft-quoted *locus classicus* of Christ's tirade against the Pharisees (Matthew 23:25). He likens them to whitewashed tombs, which look expensive on the outside but on the inside are full of mould, decay, and the bones of the dead.²⁷

This elaborate metaphoric imagery of deception was increasingly applied to the perception of actual images and the evaluation of their meaning.²⁸ There exists a report from the thirteenth century about a jurist from Bologna who claimed that one could find only ants inside the *Volto Santo* in Lucca.²⁹ Similarly, a contemporary joke suggests that, in light of the prominence of

also: Cole, 'Old in New in the early Trecento', p. 232.

25 For the discussion of these explanatory models: Klaus Krüger, 'Die Lesbarkeit von Bildern. Bemerkungen zum bildungssoziologischen Kontext von kirchlichen Bildausstattungen im Mittelalter', in *Bild und Bildung. Ikonologische Interpretationen vormoderner Dokumente von Erziehung und Bildung*, ed. by Christian Rittelmeyer and Erhard Wiersing (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), pp. 105–33.

26 For general background see: Ingrid Hahn, 'Zur Theorie der Personenerkenntnis in der deutschen Literatur des 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 99 (1977), pp. 395–444, esp. p. 427.

27 Hahn, 'Zur Theorie', p. 428.

28 Horst Wenzel, 'Repräsentation und schöner Schein am Hof und in der höfischen Literatur', in *Höfische Repräsentation: das Zeremoniell und die Zeichen*, ed. by Hedda Ragotzky and Horst Wenzel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), pp. 171–208, esp. p. 189; and Horst Wenzel, 'Imaginatio und Memoria. Medien der Erinnerung im höfischen Mittelalter', in *Mnemosyne: Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Dietrich Harth (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1991), pp. 57–82, esp. p. 67.

29 Gustav Schnürer and Joseph M. Ritz, *Sankt Kummernis und Volto Santo* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1934), p. 163.

Saint Francis, the Dominicans arrange a saint for themselves even if they have to fashion him out of straw.³⁰ These are only two from a number of telling testimonies.³¹

As we have seen, it is indeed evident in contemporary pictorial practice that it was not only the understanding of the particular relation between reality and its visual representation that was increasingly transformed, but subsequently that there was also a novel and intense awareness for the 'correctness' of representation and its 'likelihood', or else, for its *falsitas* and the necessity of rectification.³²

Francis is a notable example: his true physical appearance was fiercely debated, especially the authenticity of the stigmata. These arguments were mirrored in a series of testimonies on the polemics against his visual representations, the disbelief in their 'correctness' and their enforced 'corrections', as well as on the intervention of the Lesser Brothers and even the papacy against these attacks.³³

Finally, the statues of Mary and the saints dressed in real garments are also significant in this interchange between fiction and reality.³⁴ It is not by chance that this custom appears in ever-growing numbers from the fourteenth century onwards, and it strikingly indicates the increasing practice of mimesis. Their complex and hybrid existence can be best illustrated with a later and well-documented example from outside Italy. When the long-venerated Mother of God in Tournai, which had received actual clothing already in the fourteenth century, was destroyed in the sixteenth century during the Wars of Religion, the church authorities replaced her straightaway with a wooden staff.³⁵ Apart from a small, unrecognizable part of the face, the staff was covered with clothes and from then on it was deceitfully presented to the believers as the simulation of the Mother of God. The example shows how ambivalent, or indeed paradox, the identity of such constructs could become, if the representation of individual existence was

30 *Anecdotes historiques d'Étienne de Bourbon*, ed. by A. Lecoy de La Marche (Paris, 1877), p. 322.

31 For the contemporary debates about 'false saints' and the problems of their visual representations see: Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien*, p. 78.

32 Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien*, p. 61, no. 122. Creighton Gilbert, 'A Statement of the Aesthetic Attitude around 1230', *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts*, 13 (1985), 125–52, esp. p. 127; Lawrence G. Duggan, 'Was art really the Book of the Illiterate', *Word&Image*, 5 (1989), 227–51, esp. p. 234. For the burgeoning reflection on 'false' and 'true', copies and deceitful images from the thirteenth century see in general: Giles Constable, 'Forgery and Plagiarism in the Middle Ages', *Archiv für Diplomatik*, 29 (1983), 1–41. Horst Fuhrmann, 'Die Fälschungen im Mittelalter', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 197 (1963), 529–54. For the same context from the viewpoint of literary studies: Fritz Peter Knapp, 'Historische Wahrheit und poetische Lüge. Die Gattungen weltlicher Epik und ihre theoretische Rechtfertigung im Hochmittelalter', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 54 (1980), 581–635; Peter von Moos, 'Fictio autoris. Eine theoriegeschichtliche Miniatur am Rande der Institutio Traiani', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, MGH Schriften 33 (Hannover, 1988), I, pp. 739–80.

33 Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien*, p. 47.

34 Systematic analysis of this phenomenon is still missing. Hans Wentzel, 'Bekleiden von Bildwerken', *RDK*, 2 (1948), 219–25; Ursula Mayerhofer, 'Bekleidete Prozessionsfiguren in Tirol. Ein Beitrag zur Kult-Funktion von Bildern', *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 8 (1985), pp. 107–20; Richard C. Trexler, 'Der Heiligen neue Kleider: eine analytische Skizze zur Be- und Entkleidung von Statuen', in *Symbolik und Sozialbezug des Körpers im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Klaus Schreiner and Norbert Schnitzler (Munich: Fink, 1992), pp. 365–402.

35 Jean Dumoulin, 'Le culte de Notre-Dame à la cathédrale de Tournai', *Revue diocésaine de Tournai*, 18 (1963), 333; Trexler, 'Der Heiligen neue Kleider', p. 366 and p. 385.

transposed completely onto the shell of outer appearance, and thus the figure of the Madonna turned into an 'empty statue' without substance.

For our outlook on the Italian Trecento, this case is of particular interest. It is only in this region that sculpture survived from the middle of the century onwards – sculpture which was created solely for the purpose of being dressed up. The concept of an ambivalent and paradox identity was already an inherent part of the statue: the block-like design, the neglect to details, and the reduced workmanship of the body and garment make this abundantly clear.³⁶ The logical consequence of such figures was the skeleton-like mannequin, the saint with a dress-maker dummy. We have intact examples from the seventeenth century onwards, yet we do not know whether they existed in similar or comparable form already in the Trecento.³⁷ Anyhow, the abovementioned ironic advice that the Dominicans should fashion their own saint out of a straw-mannequin is a telling analogy here.

There is yet another example which reveals how the higher authorities established the decisive degree of difference between semblance or deception, between true or false. In a testimony from c. 1320 for a trial on idolatry, which was brought against a group of citizens in Recanati, it is documented that the suspects founded new obscure cults in their homes. In the centre of these cults were wooden carved statues, dressed as bishops and knights with accessories such as garments, mitre or sword. They matched closely the prototypes of the established Christian cult (bishop and military saints). Because of this similarity, the clergy were all the more severe in branding these statues as demonic illusions. Meanwhile, the suspects themselves accused the images in the church of being deceptions (*truffas que sunt depicte in muris*).³⁸

Image stands here against image, semblance against semblance. The controlled and officially sanctioned understanding of 'true' or 'false' and 'semblance' or 'being' emphasizes the constant and implicit danger of disintegration that threatens pictorial representation and the potential meaning it claims to embody. It seems that this set of tensions is necessarily inherent in the new aesthetics of the fictive.

36 Regarding the sporadically surviving material see the references: Wentzel, 'Bekleiden von Bildwerken', p. 221; Pietro De Achiardi, 'Alcune opere di scultura in legno dei secoli XIV e XV', *L'Arte*, 7 (1904), 356–76, esp. 359; Vittoria Kienerk, 'L'Annunciazione di Ghizzano', *Belle Arti*, 1 (1946/48), 51–54, esp. 53; Ilaria Toesca, *Andrea e Nino Pisani* (Florence: Sansoni, 1950), p. 58; *Andrea, Nino e Tommaso, scultori pisani*, ed. by Mariagiulia Burresi (Milan: Electa, 1983), p. 191, no. 48.

37 Wolfgang Brückner, 'Mannequins. Von Modepuppen, Traggestellen, Scheinleibern, Schandbildern und Wachsfiguren', in *Traumwelt der Puppen*, ex. cat., ed. by Barbara Krafft (Munich: Hirmer, 1991), 1–23, and also p. 102.

38 Mariano D'Alatri, 'Gli idolatri recanatesi secondo un rotolo vaticano del 1320', *Collectanea franciscana*, 33 (1963), 82–105.